



PS3
PlayStation 3

PSP
PlayStation Portable

PlayStation 2

PlayStation Network

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

ISSUE 51 JANUARY 2011
100% Australian Content



WIN
\$4,000+
WORTH OF GAMES
IN OUR MEGA-
GIVEAWAY!

2011
52 GAMES YOU MUST SEE!
LittleBigPlanet 2
Brink
Killzone 3
Homefront
RAGE
Mass Effect 2
inFamous 2
DiRT 3
and many, many more!

REVIEWED! ▶

**ASSASSIN'S CREED
BROTHERHOOD**

How it slays the competition!

**DUKE NUKEM
FOREVER**

Exclusive interview with
the man who saved a king!

**NEED FOR SPEED
HOT PURSUIT**

Redefining arcade racing!

**Mortal
Kombat**
NEW SECRETS EXPOSED!

**CALL OF DUTY:
BLACK OPS**
The definitive verdict!

ISSUE 51 JANUARY 2011
AUS \$14.95 NZ \$16.95 inc GST

9 771834 380002

01

PRINT POST APPROVED
PP255003/06871

HOW ROBOTS ARE REPLACING YOU • ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR **FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS**



PlayStation
Network

FREE to join
to play

"PS3", "PLAYSTATION 3", "PS3" and "OXID" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "SONY" and "PS" are registered trademarks of Sony Corporation. "make.believe" is a trademark of the same company. "Blu-ray Disc" and "BD" are trademarks. Gran Turismo 5 ©2010 Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Published by Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. Developed by Polyphony Digital Inc. "Polyphony Digital" logo, Gran Turismo and GT are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Manufacturers, cars, names, brands and associated imagery featured in this game in some cases include trademarks and/or copyrighted materials of their respective owners. Any depiction or recreation of real world locations, entities, businesses, or organizations is not intended to be or imply any sponsorship or endorsement of this game by such party or parties. All rights reserved. Broadband internet service required. Users are responsible for broadband access fees. Charges apply for some content. PlayStation Network and PlayStation Store subject to terms of use and not available in all countries and languages. Users under 18 require parental consent. SPS2144/OPSMR2



TAKE IT TO THE TRACK

WITH OVER 1,000 CARS, COUNTLESS TRACKS, STUNNING
GRAPHICS AND INFINITE RACING CHALLENGES,
GT5 IS THE ULTIMATE ARENA TO SETTLE ANY SCORE.

gran-turismo.com



Caution: Gaming
experience may
change online



PS3™

PlayStation 3

GT

GRAN TURISMO® 5
THE REAL DRIVING SIMULATOR



OUT NOVEMBER 25



SONY
make.believe

"52 games for the next 52 weeks – and these are just the ones we already know about"

COVER STORY

2011:

You've got questions, we've got answers p36

The future is digital seduction

Knowing stuff is okay, but it pales in comparison to the big exciting box of secrets that is the future. We gaze into our crystal ball and divine the names of games to watch.



10 Duke Nukem Interview

We secure a chance to catch up with the creative minds at Gearbox Software and find out about innovation, imagination and interaction (with poop).



48 Welcome to Pain

No amount of paracetamol can prepare you for the onslaught that is *Mortal Kombat*. We know, because we've played it (literally) to death.

ON THE COVER

10 Duke Nukem Forever

We see why this is worth the extremely long wait

48 Mortal Kombat

Revamped and aiming for a flawless victory

60 Call of Duty: Black Ops

Check out our COD piece! Not as sexual as it sounds

66 Assassins' Creed Brotherhood

He's not stabby, he's my brother

70 Hot Pursuit

We find the second best way to get sideways with some curves



54 OPS Gift Guide & Giveaway

'Tis the season to be jolly and to rack up thine credit card bill. Christmas purchases are unavoidable, we're here to make sure you spend well.



16 Top 10

Apparently the 'one hit wonder' phenomenon isn't unique to the music industry.



14 Interview

We drop an exclusive line to Bioware and find out more about *Dragon Age 2*



28 Opinion

Angry Sackboy tells us why you need a redhead at your side in outer-space



► INSIDER

In Short 09
All the essential news nuggets delivered as one tasty column

Interview 10
Questions and answers for industry heads

In Reality 12
How close are we to cloaking suits?

In Focus 15
A closer look at the best upcoming PS3 games

Top 10 16
The top ten one hit wonders of PlayStation history

In Your Face 18
A great debate will rage here every month

Insane 19
We have some fun at somebody else's expense

Around the World 20
Gaming news and events from the far reaches of the globe

Calendar 21
A month and a bit of essential activities and releases

Release Schedule 22
An up-to-date list of all upcoming and recently-released PS3 titles

Opinion: Petr Joura 24
Game design 101: more rocket launchers isn't the answer?

Opinion: James Cottey 26
James salutes the bold creature that is the half-breed game

Opinion: Angry Sackboy 28
Mass Effect 2 and why you need to play as a woman in it

Inbox 30
Your thoughts, letters, and feedback from the web and email

◀ Page 84

DLC: Red Dead Redemption Undead Nightmare

It's got zombie kin and horses without skin, but is it yeehaw worthy?

► REGULAR

Internet 82
News, online reviews and DLC roundup

Insight 86
Hints, tips, tricks and cheats for the latest games

Intermission 88
DVD, Blu-ray, PlayStation Store and cinema reviews

Index 92
Your essential guide to the very best – and worst – games out there

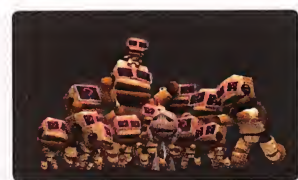
► FEATURES



Welcome to Pain 48
After years of hiding and planning, the *Mortal Kombat* franchise teleport-punches back in, impales us with a spear and tells our attention to "get over here". Who are we to refuse?

Gift Guide 54
We get all your window-shopping done early. Truly, these are the goods and services that the cool kids are transacting upon.

► PREVIEWS



2011 Questions and Answers 36
You may be swimming in a sea of Christmas games right now, but you should always think about your future. Try not to drool on it too much.

► REVIEWS



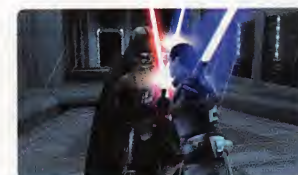
Call of Duty: Black Ops 60



Assassin's Creed Brotherhood 66

Need for Speed Hot Pursuit 70

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom 72



Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II 74

EA SPORTS MMA 75

Prince of Persia Trilogy 75

Rock Band 3 76

Splatterhouse 78



James Bond 007: Blood Stone 79

God of War: Ghost of Sparta 80

Valkyria Chronicles II 80

Subscribe NOW! Call 136 116
See page 32 for details ►

SAVE 50%
OFF THE NEWSSTAND PRICE

Meet the team



Luke Reilly Editor

I'm at home with *Rock Band 3*. Adam isn't writing this but he is stronger than a ninja, or a bear. Or a *ninja bear*.

Playing: *Rock Band 3*
Wanting: *LA Noire*



Stephanie Goh Art Director

Gutted Mark Webber didn't win the F1 WDC – thankfully neither did Alonso. Thank you Petrov!

Playing: *Fallout New Vegas*
Wanting: *Gran Turismo 5*



Adam Mathew Associate Editor

This entire month has been an epic training montage for me. I am now ready to face you and your 'Liger style'.

Playing: *Ico*
Wanting: *Unco*



James Cottee Contributor

I've been prowling the Mojave Wasteland and obsessing over what perk I should choose next.

Playing: *Fallout: New Vegas*
Wanting: *Valkyria Chronicles III*



James Ellis Contributor

Searching for Overnight Beefcake powder to make me look more muscular than a skinned horse.

Playing: *Castlevania*
Wanting: *Gran Turismo 5*



Nathan Lawrence Contributor

Learning that Sydney is the new Melbourne in terms of weather.

Playing: *CoD: Black Ops*
Wanting: *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*



Dave Kozicki Contributor

After spending nearly 80 hours in *New Vegas* I'm going back to *Battlefield*.

Playing: *BFBC 2*
Wanting: *Battlefield: Bad Company 2 Vietnam*



Toby McCasker Contributor

So, *New Vegas*: is that Mark Morgan's *original* score I hear? Man. I think I may be addicted to this.

Playing: *Fallout: New Vegas*
Wanting: *Valkyria Chronicles III*



Angry Sackboy Contributor

We'd thought he'd take it easy since his sequel's coming out. We were wrong. He's still bellowing for *GT5*.

Playing: *GT5 Prologue*
Wanting: *Gran Turismo 5*

Editorial



Hi there. New face at the top of the page this issue, but it's only for one month and for a good reason. While we usually keep our non-gaming lives out of the mag Luke's away as he's just welcomed a newborn into his life. That meant as he peeled out of the driveway of *OPS* Towers, the sunlight glinting off his rear window, he passed his other child – this magnificent production – over for Adam and I to mind. I reckon we did a

pretty good job and handled it without taking a scratch.

Well, sort of.

It wasn't until the last minute that The Worst Thing That Could Happen happened: Sony called to say we wouldn't have the review code for *GT5*. Blame it on us being on the other side of the world and shipping dates, tidal patterns, warehouse distribution. Blame it on us being absolutely sure it would be here and jinxing it last issue.

Then we proposed a trip to go to Polyphony Digital in Japan and just play it until we could play it no more. It was going to work! We know where Polyphony's offices are! We've met Kazunori Yamauchi a handful of times before! We knew he'd admire our dedication.

Suitcases were being prepped to figure out who was going to go. Tickets were about to be booked, then Rolls Royce engines fitted to planes all over the world just fell apart. Flights were snapped up by other travellers in line, we just couldn't get out of the country in time, a pregnant woman was about to give birth (see above) so we begrudgingly admitted defeat. As victims of circumstance we looked towards 2011, but not before taking stock of the great games that have been released in 2010. Many of these hit in the past few weeks.

Even without the most anticipated game of the year (well, decade for some) there is a stack of quality titles that should be in your consoles: *Call of Duty: Black Ops*, *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, *Need For Speed Hot Pursuit*, *Red Dead Redemption*, *FIFA 11*, *F1 2010*, *God of War III*. And not just sequels; Sega's *Bayonetta* and *Vanquish* stand out as highlights along with *Split/Second*.

Still, it's amazing to see what fresh ideas a team can put into a sequel or series, and to see refinements of solid ideas, which is why we're aching to play *GT5*. We're always interested to know where developers go for original ideas when they're on their second, third or fifth revision. We have more interviews planned with devs about their latest games. We can't say too much. We don't want to jinx it.

Paul Taylor
Deputy Editor

Playing: *Need For Speed Hot Pursuit*
Wanting: *LittleBigPlanet 2*

SPEAK WITH US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



Post *OPS* Feedback,
Citrus Media, PO Box 20154, World
Square, NSW 2002



E-Mail ops@citrusmedia.com.au
Twitter: www.twitter.com/OPS_Aus



Facebook: www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Question: what is the gift that keeps on giving the whole year round? Love? Wrong. A scratch-and-sniff calendar of celebrity crotchets? No. Please stop abusing our rhetorical system.

The answer we were looking for is: an *OPS* subscription! Think about it, every issue – cheaper – delivered to your door via magic.

TURN TO PAGE 32

Editorial & Design

Editor

Luke Reilly

Deputy Editor

Paul Taylor

Associate Editor

Adam Mathew

Contributors

James Ellis, James Cottee, Anthony O'Connor, David Kozicki, Toby McCasker, Jared Mallia, Andy Astruc, Nathan Lawrence, Casey Brown, Petr Joura

Art Director

Stephanie Goh

Creative Director

Paul Cook

Publishing & Circulation

Circulation Enquiries

(02) 9186 9114

Advertising & Marketing

National Business Manager

Nikki Turnbull

(02) 9186 9104

How to contact us

Tel (02) 9186 9186

Fax (02) 9186 9187

Email ops@citrusmedia.com.au

Official PlayStation Magazine

PO Box 20154

World Square

NSW 2002

Want to subscribe?

Call 136 116

(NZ residents

+61 2 9282 8000)

Fax (02) 9267 4363

www.magshop.com.au

Management

Director

Jim Flynn

Financial Controller

Stuart Harle

Distributed by Network
Services Company in Australia
and Netlink in NZ.

Printed by CaxtonWeb Pty Ltd.

Software piracy should not be condoned.
To report suspicious activity please e-mail
piracy@scee.net or alternatively, dial (02)
8266 5111.

For PlayStation 3 technical support and
registration queries, please call 1300
365 911. The 'PS' logo and 'PlayStation'
are trademarks of Sony Computer
Entertainment Inc. © Copyright 2001
All rights reserved. Official PlayStation
Magazine accepts no responsibility for loss
or damage of unsolicited contributions.
© 2010. All rights reserved. No articles or
images may be reproduced wholly or in
part without prior written permission from
the publisher.

Special thanks: KJR :: Vinnie ::
Nicole :: Lucy: Luke :: Number Two
:: LD :: Fish and chips :: Brad :: Oil ::
Sigourney Weaver :: Raje



Criterion games

WARNING

FAST NEEDS

NO FRIENDS

People with relationships are advised against the playing of this game. Connecting to **NEED FOR SPEED™ AUTOLOG** enables extreme competition through precise documentation of friends' records and stats.

Hard feelings. Creative profanity. Grudge matches likely. Electronic Arts™ and Need for Speed accept no liability for the dissolution of friendships, families, intimate relationships & partnerships.

NEED FOR SPEED **HOT PURSUIT**

IN STORES NOW!

Go to hotpursuit.needforspeed.com to learn how fast turns friends to foes.



Caution: Gaming experience may change online



Available on the App Store

EA GAMES

This Month

- 10 Interview
Randy Pitchford
and Steve Gibson
of Gearbox Software
- 12 In Reality
War robots
- 14 Interview
Dragon Age II's
Heather Rabatich
- 15 Infocus
Batman: Arkham City
- 16 Top Ten
One hit wonders
- 18 In Your Face
A great debate
- 19 Insane
It should be a game
- 20 Around the World
Global gaming snippets
- 21 Calendar
This month and beyond
- 22 Release schedule
The big list
- 23 In Their Words
Quotes from the industry
- 24 Opinion
Petr Joura
- 26 Opinion
Angry Sackboy
- 28 Opinion
James Cottee
- 30 Inbox
Your letters answered

"Infinity Ward is not handling development on Modern Warfare 3"

The secret games of 2011

Hush-hush projects we might be hearing about within the year

Plenty of titles scheduled for 2011 have been officially announced but, inevitably, there are also plenty that have not.

Grand Theft Auto V is the heavy hitter here; it's likely we'll hear something about this before 2011 is done and dusted.

We do not believe you'll see *GTA V* in stores in 2011. Rockstar, which only publishes a few titles per year, already has *Max Payne 3* and *L.A. Noire* slated for 2011 and Rockstar North (the Scottish studio behind the *GTA* series) is probably focusing on the PS3 exclusive *Agent*. Since *Agent* has been announced and *GTA V* has not we should assume that *Agent* is has priority. We're pegging 2012 for *GTA V*.

A large billboard ad in *Episodes from Liberty City* (replicated in the manual) teases that "It's Over!" for Liberty City and that the *GTA IV* stage has come to a close. Unfounded rumours have suggested a return to Vice City while others have claimed that Rockstar is "definitely" researching locations around Hollywood "and the surrounding area." This would indicate Los Santos could be the new location, although it shouldn't be ignored that

this research could be related to *L.A. Noire*.

We've been awaiting news of *Hitman 5* since 2006's *Hitman: Blood Money* but unfortunately we still know almost nothing. According to alleged sources at developer IO Interactive, we won't see the game until Christmas 2011 (at the earliest). Why we saw a sequel to *Kane & Lynch* before we saw a sequel to *Hitman* remains anyone's guess.

Ubisoft definitely has a new *Rainbow Six* title in the pipeline but that's all anyone knows about that. We think it's unlikely to be a continuation of the Vegas storyline. We'd like to see the series go global like the original *Rainbow Six* novel.

It now seems certain we'll be seeing a *Guitar Hero: Red Hot Chili Peppers*. The title was first rumoured in May in an online survey in which Activision asked users questions about how interested they would be in a *Guitar Hero: Red Hot Chili Peppers* videogame. Now that *Rock Band 3* has been released it's been revealed that the track 'Give It Away' from *Rock Band 2* was one of the five songs not available for export from the *Rock Band 2*

disc for use in *Rock Band 3*. Furthermore, the track 'Dani California' (which was exportable from *Rock Band* into *Rock Band 2*) has also been prevented from appearing in *Rock Band 3*. This also happened to two Soundgarden tracks (their album *Telephantasm* was made available with *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock*) and suggests the Chilis tunes have been exclusively stitched up by Acti. Incidentally the Chilis have a new album due in 2011.

Uncharted 3 is totally inevitable, but the rumour is we may see it in time for Christmas 2011. Nolan North, the voice of Drake, revealed he'd be reprising his role back in January. Equally inevitable is a yearly *Call of Duty* title, but will it be *Modern Warfare 3* or will it be a new spin-off for the series? Also, will Infinity Ward develop it or will it be from another internal Activision studio, like Sledgehammer Games? Rumours have it Infinity Ward is, in fact, not handling development on *Modern Warfare 3*.

God of War II director Cory Barlog is very likely working on the *Mad Max* game (probably a tie-in with the 2012 movie *Mad Max: Fury*

In Short

A brief look at this month's news



Issue 51 January 2011

- ▶ Mike Haggard has been spotted in **Marvel vs. Capcom 3** and it looks like he'll be a playable character. We're currently vibrating with excitement.
- ▶ EA and Steven Spielberg's secret project, code-named LMNO, was officially canned by the publisher in October. Reports indicate, however, that the first-person hybrid built on "escape gameplay" has "been dead for at least a year."
- ▶ EA has cancelled **NBA Elite 11** and transferred future development of the franchise from EA Canada to EA Tiburon.
- ▶ **Resident Evil** and **Vanquish** creator is working on a major, AAA title for Bethesda.
- ▶ Fender has finally announced when its Squier Stratocaster guitar, the real guitar that works with **Rock Band 3**, will be available. It should be available in the US by March 1, 2011 for US\$280. If it comes here it's not going to be anywhere near as cheap. **p78**
- ▶ EA senior vice president Patrick Soderlund recently told CVG that EA has had contact with PSP2.
- ▶ The **Burnout** series is not dead.
- ▶ Vancouver-based Slant Six Games (developer of the **SOCOM** series) is rumoured to be working on a forthcoming **Resident Evil** title for Capcom. The Slant Six official website indicates that "an amazing new project" is in development with a "new publishing partner on a world class franchise." Giving development duties to a Western developer wouldn't be a new strategy for Capcom – **Dead Rising 2** was developed by Vancouver-based Blue Castle Games and **Devil May Cry** is now in the hands of UK-based Ninja Theory.
- ▶ Crytek UK (formerly Free Radical Design) may have ditched its old name but it hasn't ditched the **TimeSplitters** franchise. Managing director Karl Hilton said the developer is still shopping around that IP to publishers.
- ▶ **Mega Man** creator Keiji Inafune has blasted the Japanese gaming industry in an interview after his recent exit from Capcom. Inafune says that Japanese publishers are "making developers into salarymen" and that he could no longer be the designer he wanted to be at Capcom.
- ▶ Ready at Dawn co-founder Ru Weerasuriya confirmed that **God of War: Ghost of Sparta** is the studio's last PSP game and its next title will be an original IP.
- ▶ **Blur** and **Blood Stone 007** creators Bizarre Creations are in dire straits at the time of writing, what with Activision "exploring options regarding the future of the studio, including a potential sale of the business". Ouch. **p79**
- ▶ For those of you who thought **Shift** and the concept of adding 'unleashed' to the end of games were dead, **Need for Speed Shift 2 Unleashed** is here to prove you wrong. This Black Box-made sequel will sport an all-new rendering engine with a massive graphics overhaul. It's also focusing more on night racing and the authentic degradation of tracks and cars.

Road) at *Just Cause* developer Avalanche Studios. As long as it's filled with old Fords and Holden's we're good.

Crystal Dynamics has dabbled with the co-op focused, isometric downloadable title *Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light* but we hear a fully-fledged *Tomb Raider* reboot may be on the cards for late 2011 starring a younger, inexperienced and more female-friendly Lara.

Keiji Inafune, the now-former global head of production at Capcom, said in September that Capcom wants "*Resident Evil 6* to hit the market as soon as possible" and that there would be news soon. There's been none to date but we expect it won't be long.

Codemasters has a full plate with *DIRT 3* and *F1 2011* but we wouldn't be surprised to hear a new *GRID* was in the works. The first *GRID* was let down by a paltry amount of tracks but with a glut of circuits created at Codies since (Mount Panorama as *GRID* DLC and the 19 tracks of the 2010 F1 season) *GRID 2* could be a far more feature packed racer. With some tracks shared with the V8 Supercar series (Bahrain, Albert Park, Shanghai, Yas

Marina) we could be nearing the point where it becomes viable to reinsert V8 Supercars back into the series (the AVESCO license demands it's all tracks or nothing).

First-party titles like a new *Syphon Filter* and *The Getaway* are a possibility. A facial motion-capture company revealed it was working on a title called *Syphon Filter 5* for PS3 with Sony Bend. This was well over 12 months ago and we've heard nothing since. While was initially reported *The Getaway* was dead (partly due to the studio being forced to dedicate more effort to *EyePet*, partly due to the game's lack of online features) *The Getaway* for PS3 is apparently not dead. Yet. Stay tuned.

Finally, a sequel to the excellent *Bully* could be a possibility. In November 2009, composer Shawn Lee (who scored *Bully*) was asked if he was scoring any more games in the near future and he responded, "Yes. It looks like I will be doing the soundtrack for *Bully 2* in the not so distant future."

Will we see that before the guaranteed sequel to *Red Dead Redemption*?

The gentlemen responsible for Duke's new D-Day



► INTERVIEW

Duke Nukem Forever:

2009 Regicide, 2010 Resurrection, 2011 Resurgence

Gearbox Software president, **Randy Pitchford**, and the head of marketing, **Steve Gibson**, tell us why you should continue to bet on Duke

OPS: Interactivity was a big part of *Duke 3D*, can you tell us what to expect in *Duke Forever*?

RP: I don't wanna give away any spoilers but there's a lot of fun stuff you can do and a lot of stupid stuff too. Like on the first level there's a turd...

SG: In toilet number four.

RP: Duke can reach in and grab this turd. And he can walk around and you can throw it at things, and I saw this one guy doing that for around twenty minutes; just throwing the turd at different things to see how they'd react, to see what would get the smudge on it and what won't. For that guy, the game's gonna be forty hours long!

OPS: In many ways, *Duke* is the sum of a few pretty typical 80s/90s action heroes. Do you think that he translates to today's audience?

SG: Nowadays, the stereotypical cliché hero [Duke] is actually kinda fresh compared to all of these other heroes that have gotten all deep and emotional. I think for those of us that played *Duke 3D* and have been gamers this whole time, it makes perfect sense. The real test is with new gamers, and I'm very fascinated to find out what happens with them.

OPS: So no *Duke Nukem* 'emo' skin then?

SG: No way! If we look at the protagonists of other games, they seem to be getting more and more of the idea that they need emotional baggage, they need some other kind of complication in their life for a gamer to have fun. And when you think of *Duke Nukem*, he is not that. We figured this out: games can be fun when you're just blowing shit up, looking at titties and shooting guys.

OPS: How much of the 3D Realms version of *Duke Nukem Forever* is present in the current game?

RP: It's crazy to think about what they did with the 30-guy team before that studio shut down. And



Below: Duke's ride. You just *know* it has truck nuts.

it's because of them that we're all playing this today and within them was all of the institutional knowledge of that 12 years of development. Every asset, every line of code was all within them and they kept the dream alive.

OPS: What's happened to Duke between Duke 3D and Duke Nukem Forever?

RP: Duke Nukem saved the world so he's the most famous guy on the entire planet. He owns the biggest casino in Las Vegas and his house is the penthouse of this casino. He lives the most opulent, decadent, narcissistic, hedonistic life you could possibly imagine. So here he is in this level where the game begins, 12 years after he saved the world, and he's finally playing his own video game. And he has the same opinion about it that we do, "Yeah it's good, but f@#k it's been 12 years since I saved the world, did it have to take them this long in order for them to finish my game?"

OPS: Any plans to honour the 'ancient' pre-orders for Duke Nukem Forever?

RP: Something cool should be done there. If Take 2 doesn't do it, I'm gonna figure out a way to do it. I want to have some kind of contest to find out who's got the oldest pre-order. And whoever has the oldest pre-order needs to get something epic. They bought it before any of us and that guy needs to be rewarded. He also needs a hug.

OPS: How are the semi-destructible environments handled in the game?

RP: Yeah, the destructible elements in *Duke Forever* surprise people. It's fun to feel feedback. You're using these powerful weapons and it just feels good when they do stuff; when the weapons actually have an impact on what you're shooting.

SG: It's the blowing shit up side of the fun.

RP: Yeah, even when you miss it's fun.

OPS: Has that got a tactical element to it as well?

RP: Absolutely. If there's a Pig Cop under a falling object he'll get squished. And then there's the classic shooting the red barrel and making it blow up and taking out the bad guys. But there are a lot of other things too. The fun comes when you discover it.

" Duke can reach in and grab this turd. And he can walk around and you can throw it at things "

OPS: Any plans for the continuation of the franchise after this game is released?

RP: When I made the investment to buy not just the game but the whole franchise, I wouldn't make such a decision without believing that there was a future there. I haven't thought about the future, we haven't planned it yet. Right now we have to be laser-focussed on this. We have to put all of our attention on making sure that this game is delivered and then we'll take a deep breath, recover from whatever and just see what happens next.

OPS: How do you walk the line between homage and remaining fresh with the Duke?


RP: Y'know, it is a new game. But you can't have

something like *Duke Nukem Forever* and not pay homage to our memory, and especially given the time that has gone on. So the things that we want and kinda imagine are there. But if it's just a 100 per cent remake then it's not a new game at all, it's just a rehash of the old. But there's gotta be stuff like pipe bombs, right? And yes, there are strippers too.

OPS: How long is the campaign?

RP: The whole Duke Nukem adventure plays out in real-time and it's pretty big too. It took me about 17 hours the first time I got through it, so it's about three *Call of Duty's*... and some spare change.

OPS: And when can the world finally expect to play it?

SG: We've announced 2011, and with this game you don't announce shit unless you're sure. We've got it narrowed down to a little bit of a window but the game is currently playable front to back. We're just doing bug fixing, polishing, memory management, all those kinda things. I'll commit to before Christmas. There you go. 

► RETURN OF THE KING

We also got to have a brief stint of much-needed hands-on time with *Duke Nukem Forever*, and are pleased to announce that it did more than simply prove the game is alive and well. Although Gearbox is clearly holding their new cards close to their chest, fans of *Duke 3D* will be glad to hear that we saw most of Duke's classic arsenal: shotguns, pistols, dual-rocket-firing Devastators, pipe bombs and the Shrink Ray. The graphics were crisp, the humour pitch perfect, and the level of interactivity was hilariously over the top. Throw in some memorable one-liners, cheeky sexual innuendos and satisfying enemy gibbing, and we were certainly craving more.

► IN REALITY

How far are we away from robot wars?

As seen in: Metal Gear Solid 4, the Terminator movies, Alien movies, H.A.W.X. 2, Portal, and a number of other games and movies

War Machines... Terminators... M.O.D.O.K... The world of science-fiction is chock full of robots programmed to kill. Turn your mind's eye to the topic of battle robots, and you might picture glistening chrome endoskeletons striding over irradiated battlefields, filling the air with laser beams as they casually stomp through bleached human skulls.

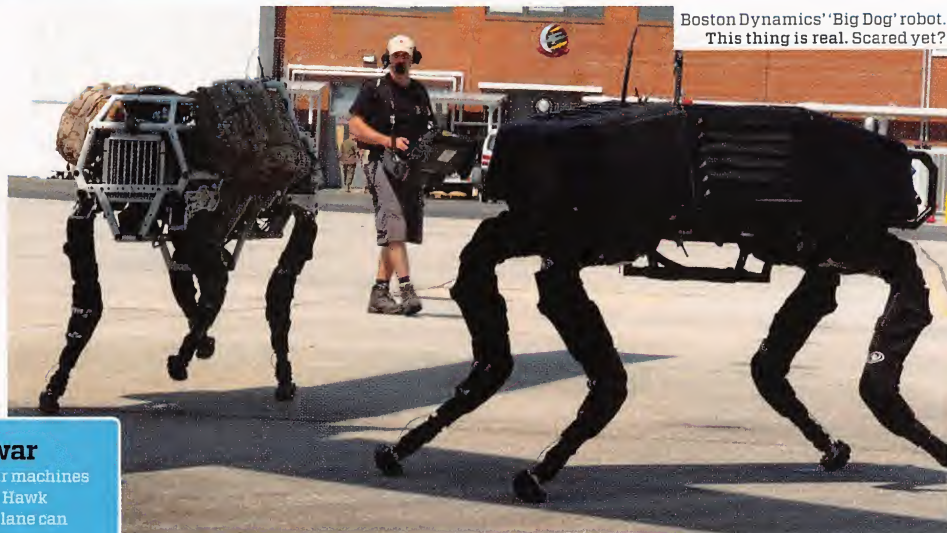
The battle robots of the real world are far more diverse than those of James Cameron's limited imagination. And they've been with us for longer than you might imagine; strictly speaking, the age of automated warfare began in the late 19th century, with the invention of the torpedo.

Yet it is the silicon age where war robots have come into their own, complementing and enhancing the capabilities of human servicemen – though they do not look anything like the metal men of the silver screen. Most 'battle robots' are simply auto-pilots; military vehicles are far more effective once you figure out how to make them work without humans.

Humans can suffer from fatigue, and sleep deprivation can impair their judgment. Perhaps you've seen those sorry bomb-cam videos with spaced-out allied pilots accidentally firing on friendly ground units. Thanks to improvements in UAV technology, these 'blue on blue' incidents are as preventable as they are unfortunate. A human pilot working from the ground can

► Cyber war

Automated war machines like the Global Hawk surveillance plane can be as big as passenger jets, but perhaps the mightiest robot warriors are also the smallest. Iran, ideologically opposed to nearby Israel, has made no secret of its plans to develop nuclear weapons, but the computers that control its new reactor have been thwarted by a complex Trojan, stopping the extremist regime in Tehran from getting its plutonium factory online. While Israel claims it hasn't been indulging in any cyber-shenanigans, it's definitely the country with the most to gain from a nuclear-free Iran. Cyber warfare is no longer science fiction, it is science fact, and the virus is an effective soldier.



Boston Dynamics' 'Big Dog' robot. This thing is real. Scared yet?

supervise four semi-autonomous aircraft at once, and when he gets tired, another pilot can simply stride over to his desk and take his place.

Not only are UAVs safer and easier to operate than aircraft with a human in the cockpit, they also make it easier for short-staffed air forces to hang onto the skilled personnel that control them from the ground. These 'pilots' don't even need to be in the war-zone, separated from their wives and kids; thanks to satellite networking, aviators can be just as effective when they fly a desk.

Automate the turret on an APC, and there's no way a sniper can pick off the gunner. Automate the entire vehicle, and you won't get a nasty headline every time it hits a roadside bomb. Better yet, terrorists can't snatch human hostages from a patrol if they don't exist.

Deadly as they are in isolation, robots are now learning to swarm. Even as you read this magazine, military scientists are hard at work

perfecting the software that will let fleets of automated submarines, boats, tanks, and aircraft talk not just to their human handlers, but to each other. Possessed of a networked intelligence, these swarmbots have the potential to perceive and react to emerging situations in ways that no human ever could.

They can also protect high-value targets. Current-gen AWACS planes and air warfare destroyers are multi-billion-dollar items, and the only way to use them with any margin of safety is by placing them at the centre of a network of autonomous robots.

The United States has conducted extensive (and secretive) tests of 'Johnny Five'-style robot soldiers in Iraq, and by all accounts these battle bots have been astoundingly effective, especially against a superstitious rabble. Yet for all the victories of the war machines, the need for human soldiers will not disappear in our lifetimes.

► NUMBER CRUNCHING

86.9 million

24

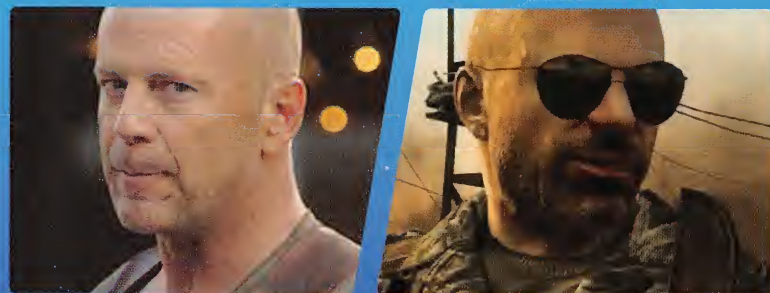
▲ The number of hours it took *Black Ops* to sell 5.6 million copies across England and the USA just after its release.

▲ The amount of kilometres raced in the *Need For Speed Hot Pursuit* demo in just two weeks.



Separated at Birth!

NO. 22 Jason 'Mr Shades' Hudon – Yippee Kai Yay Bruce 'receding hairline' Willis



How many of you did a double take when you saw the bloke on the right for the first time in-game? *Black Ops* already has Gary Oldman as Reznov, Ice Cube on double duty as multiplayer announcer and Corporal Bowman, and Australia's own Sam Worthington as story lead Alex Mason. This bloke here looks like Bruce, but he isn't Bruce – it's Ed Harris. We're not sure if there's been a game to have such a huge cast of stars.

She crossed it when
She bagged me out
On Facebook



the line

visit australia.gov.au/theline

SO YOU WANT TO BE A ... RACE CAR DRIVER?

OPTION 1

If you're reading this it's likely you're already too old to be a professional race driver. Sorry. Most prospective race car drivers begin their careers on go-karts, and they start young, according to V8 Supercar legend Glenn Seton. How young? Try seven years old.

Karting is a sound base for all streams, whether you want to get into V8 Supercars, Formula 1, Indy Cars, or whatever. It's not just so you know the best times to plant the accelerator or brake – though this is critical – it's so you can learn how to counteract a slide, figure out the best times to pass competitors and also the mechanical skills involved in making a car go faster.

Some kids hit the track every weekend, so it's like a full-time requirement outside of school. It's not cheap either. Seton estimates that parents can spend anywhere between \$50,000 to \$100,000 funding this exercise.

So, let's just say you have a benefactor willing to stump up the cash to get you up to professional standards. Then you have to get noticed, and figure out whether you're going to try and crack Australia for fortune and glory or go overseas. V8 Supercars are this country's most recognisable motorsport, but out of the thousands of hopefuls there's ultimately only 30 spots. Sure, you can go into ute racing and try and get some sponsorship but it's likely it won't be enough to make it a full-time career option.

You could try the most famous motorsport in the world, Formula 1. For that you need to be proficient with open-wheelers, and while there are some open wheeler races in Australia you're best off heading to Europe. Again, line your pockets because you'll be funding yourself on the way to Formula Fords and Formula 3.

You need the determination and will to win, and the mental capacity to deal with the intense pressure. You're pushing a car and yourself to the limits of crashing. If your mental concentration drops you're in the fence – and possibly in hospital.

TIME:

Mark Webber and Will Power, two of Australia's most well-known and recent drivers, got their break at 19. So that's 12 years of experience assuming they started at seven-years-old.

OPTION 2

Turn on GT5

TIME:

90 seconds



► INTERVIEW

The Dawn of a New Age

After the tremendous success of BioWare's traditional RPG *Dragon Age Origins*, we get down and dirty with the delightful **Heather Rabatich**, Associate Producer on *Dragon Age II*, and find out what tinkering they've done on the second outing.



There will be blood. Most of it will be splattered on you.

OPS: So from the demo, we can see that *Dragon Age II* starts off with a bang!

HR: In addition to giving you combat that is really overblown, we've kicked you off with a full set of abilities from the get go. Typically, you have to work your way up, to get them by levelling up but considering the character Barak is telling this story, he wants to make it interesting, so he's telling it as if you're already this overpowered fantastic human warrior.

OPS: So there's no longer three races to choose from here?

HR: In order to highlight the tale of the champion, Hawk, we've made the default class human. We haven't removed any of the elements of depth, rather increasing your ability to dig in even deeper into this adventure. Fans weren't overjoyed about it, but outside of taking away a sheer aesthetic quality, the play will essentially remain the same.

OPS: So it's a little more linear and guided this time around?

HR: Not exactly; you start as Hawk, no matter what. Your story's being told through this narrative. You start out as a refugee fleeing, and somehow you go through a rise to power. The way you play determines how you rose. You still have complete control over your story, and how the player and the nature of your relationships develop, but the grounding introduction is the same no matter what.

OPS: Will the combat remain the same as in *Dragon Age Origins*?

HR: We still have the very strategic and tactical combat, but we've made it feel more responsive. You can still set up each battle and each character, and you don't feel like you're losing any momentum. It remains a very natural flowing experience. We want it to be accessible to everyone.

OPS: Will you still have to micromanage your party?

HR: One of the major improvements we've made is that the AI is just smarter. If you don't want to jump around between characters, you don't have to. But if you like telling each member what to do, you have that open to you as well.

OPS: We've noticed some neat new tweaks to the conversation system, could you go into that?

HR: We haven't changed our story driven game, but we realised at times in *Dragon Age Origins*, half your screen would be covered in eleven different text options. We wanted to make it a little less confusing, so if you want to say something aggressive it would be. We had instances in the original where

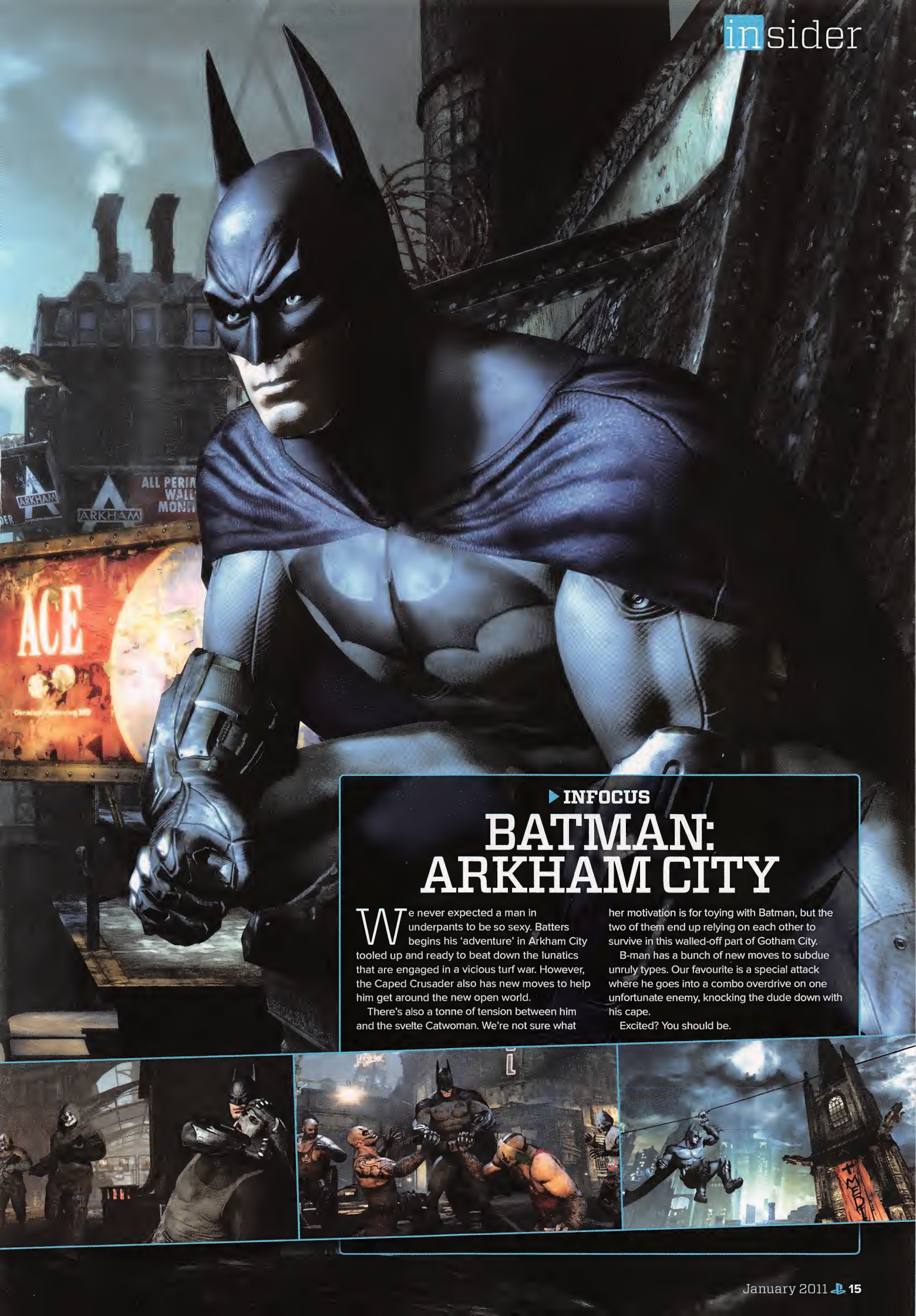
reactions occurred which were not what the intention was, enough so that we heard about it, a lot. So we've adjusted it so now you don't know exactly what they'll say, or how it will play out, but the initial intention is there. We also have the

"Investigate options" choice, for players that are new to the series, or for those that want to delve a little deeper.

OPS: Lastly, will there be a defined good or evil path?

HR: That's one of the things about *Dragon Age*, there's no one clear path. Sometimes you have to do the wrong thing to end up doing the right thing. It all depends on how you want to layer your party and interact with them. It's definitely fun to push your boundaries in a world without consequences, some of the things you do in a game you would go to prison for in real life. That's why we call it "role playing".





► INFOCUS

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

We never expected a man in underpants to be so sexy, Batters begins his 'adventure' in Arkham City toolled up and ready to beat down the lunatics that are engaged in a vicious turf war. However, the Caped Crusader also has new moves to help him get around the new open world.

There's also a tonne of tension between him and the svelte Catwoman. We're not sure what

her motivation is for toying with Batman, but the two of them end up relying on each other to survive in this walled-off part of Gotham City.

B-man has a bunch of new moves to subdue unruly types. Our favourite is a special attack where he goes into a combo overdrive on one unfortunate enemy, knocking the dude down with his cape.

Excited? You should be.



TOP TEN

One Hit Wonders

With *Red Dead Redemption* having us take a look back at one of the unsung heroes of last generation, *Red Dead Revolver*, we thought we'd whack out a list of quality titles that never got that second chance at fortune and glory. If you haven't played them, scour your local bargain bins and you may just mine some gold.



1

Freedom Fighters PS2

Freedom Fighters still, STILL, has some of the best-damned squad based mechanics to date. Playing a mere plumber in NYC as the Russkies invade, you end up leading a resistance movement and through daring deeds and charisma can recruit up to twelve revolutionaries to watch your back or eliminate the opposition.



2

Cold Winter PS2

Playing a disgraced British Air Serviceman, with an itchy trigger finger, you inflict bloody retribution on all of creation. An almost spiritual successor to the classic *GoldenEye* in tone and spirit, it displayed some of the goriest dismemberment hit zones (14 in total). Bloody awesome.



3

Canus Canem Edit PS2

Known to the rest of the world as *Bully* (thanks OFLC), this was Rockstar's least violent offering. Centring on a wee ginger rapsallion, using non-lethal versions of *GTA* staples (slingshots and bottle rockets instead of an armoury), you basically took over the school.



4

Urban Chaos: Riot Response PS2

Luke would skin us alive if we didn't throw in this one. He's been a fan of the riot shield since this shooter hit mid-2006. As part of T-Zero riot response squad, you must battle a gang terrorising the city and rescue civilians and paramedics.



5

Gun PS2

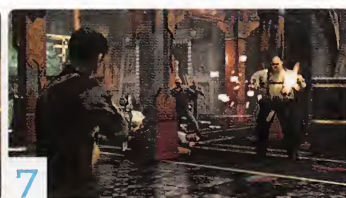
Granted, *Gun* has had a HD makeover on 'the other console', but we never saw it, so it doesn't count. This was one rollicking third-person Western, with a switch to first-person for bullet-time, great pacing and a ridiculously deep cache of weapons. It's a dusty trail that's worth walkin'.



6

Black PS2

The fact that a sequel hasn't been trotted out is a crime against gaming. Featuring limited destructibility, balls to the wall action, brilliant particle effects and explosions, *Black* was the most addictive shooter the PS2 has ever seen. We loved it, now give us another taste.



7

Stranglehold PS3

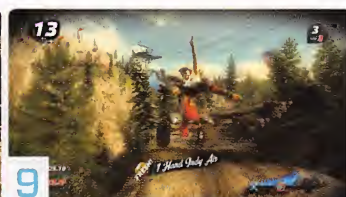
Picture this. A collaboration of Chow Yun Fat and John Woo to make a gaming sequel to their 1992 smash hit *Hard Boiled*. The result: slow-motion gun ballets, doves and henchmen eager to embrace the afterlife. Features the meatiest shotgun we've ever heard.



8

Heavenly Sword PS3

Unfairly discounted as *God of War* with boobs, there was so much more to Nariko than that. She also had great stems. One of the best launch titles on PS3, this captivating tale oozed style. It has brilliant mo-cap led by Andy Serkis and dynamite combat – what's not to love?



9

Pure PS3

Criminally underrated, *Pure* is one of the best racers to ever grace a console. Coming out of nowhere it brought *SSX* fuelled racing to ATVs resulting in gameplay more addictive than crack filled Krispy Kreme donuts. The online experience is still going pretty strong too.



10

Warhawk PS3

90 per cent of you have never even heard of it. With 32 player online-only support, *Warhawk* is the most complete gaming battlefield to date. You can utilise nine weapons on foot, or nine in a plane (with simply sublime controls), grab a jeep, tank or drop ship and it even has freaking jetpacks. JETPACKS!!!

L E O N A R D O D I C A P R I O
KEN WATANABE JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT MARION COTILLARD ELLEN PAGE TOM HARDY CILLIAN MURPHY TOM BERENGER AND MICHAEL CAINE

A FILM BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

INCEPTION

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE DARK KNIGHT™

ONCE ISN'T ENOUGH.
OWN THE DREAM.

The Mind-Blowing Action Spectacular from the Director of *The Dark Knight*™

"SPECTACULAR ACTION."

- Caryn James, NEWSWEEK

"A MASTERPIECE.
AN INSTANT CLASSIC."

- Lou Lumenick, NEW YORK POST

BUY OR RENT ON PlayStation®Store  NOW

WARNER BROS. PICTURES PRESENTS
IN ASSOCIATION WITH LEGENDARY PICTURES A SYNCOPY PRODUCTION A FILM BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN LEONARDO DICAPRIO "INCEPTION" KEN WATANABE JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT
MARION COTILLARD ELLEN PAGE TOM HARDY CILLIAN MURPHY TOM BERENGER AND MICHAEL CAINE MUSIC BY HANS ZIMMER EDITED BY LEE SMITH, A.C.E.
PRODUCTION DESIGNER GUY HENDRIX DYAS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY WALLY PFISTER, A.S.C. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CHRIS BRIGHAM THOMAS TULL PRODUCED BY EMMA THOMAS CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

LEGENDARY PICTURES

SYNCOPY



WARNER BROS. PICTURES
A WARNER BROS. PICTURES COMPANY



Violence

BATMAN and all related characters and elements are trademarks of and © DC Comics.
© 2010 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.



► IN YOUR FACE

Would you play a Call of Duty future warfare?

World War II has been milked dry, but does the future hold salvation?



Paul Taylor

NO

Although he longs to be a futurist, whatever they are, Paul likes things to be familiar, tangible, and in a striking shade of plausible.

Are you crazy? *Call of Duty* in the future? Man, I can't believe we're that far out of imagination that we need to go there.

Look, admittedly, *Call of Duty* has never been the most realistic shooter. Sure, you have real-world locations and storylines based on real world conflicts. *Black Ops* is a prime example, with the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the appearance of JFK and Robert McNamara, and the attempts on Castro's life. That latter point is totally plausible but also completely insane.

But this stuff is fantastic. More, please. More of real people who were responsible for history-defining decisions, and explore what might have happened. It's the ultimate game of 'what if?'

And, the series takes real world weaponry but adds wild stuff to it. You want an AK-47 with a grenade launcher? Sure! Slap a laser sight on it as well? Why not! Go nuts! But it's utterly fantastic. People appreciate

the crazy stuff like this because it's a riff on reality, the present day or the recent past. It's a very funny joke, or a superb remix if you want, and jokes and remixes need a point of reference, or else you need it explained and it just isn't fun anymore.

You take *CoD*, what, 100 or more years in the future and you have *Killzone*. We already have *Killzone*. It's a great game, but I'm much more engaged when I have a recognisable framework, a timeline within a generation or two of when I was born where we can say 'what if'. It's why you're all going insane for a game set in Vietnam.

It builds for a more engaging experience when you have tools and equipment that can be researched online and see just how that developer has reworked them. Blasting real Nazis versus Space Nazis in masks? No contest.

I am crazy – with boredom, because this century is sooo last century. I'm over killing 'those terrorists we don't speak of' in their home country of Fictitioustan. Hell, the videogame concept of modern warfare is so pansy it doesn't even have the balls to label who's involved in case somebody's feelings get all hurt. Cut the crap and you'll see that none of us were ever really playing a 'modern theatre of war' at all; just a Tom Clancy wannabe's wet dream made digital.

If we're already taking the piss out of 'history' and 'reality' then, why not have the bravery to extrapolate the timeline out 75 years? Even the cheese-eating surrender monkeys at Ubisoft Paris have had the guts to try it with *Ghost Warrior: Future Soldier* and I'm not ashamed to say that their efforts are making my pants tight.

One of the main concepts used in it is invisibility technology which has recently been confirmed as extremely possible by scientists inventing meta-materials. It's gonna happen people, you may as well shake hands with the future of being a ninja now. At best your experience with it may allow you to survive in an actual WWII battle, at worst it'll help you spot me in your sister's bedroom.

A shooter set in the not-too-distant future won't annoy that many people as long as the dudes designing the equipment and weapons show restraint and stay grounded in reality (because, let's face it, the bullet crowd don't mix with the laser folk). And you can't honestly tell me that a horde of semi-invisible fast-zombies wouldn't scare the big brown bejesus out of you.



Adam Mathew

YES

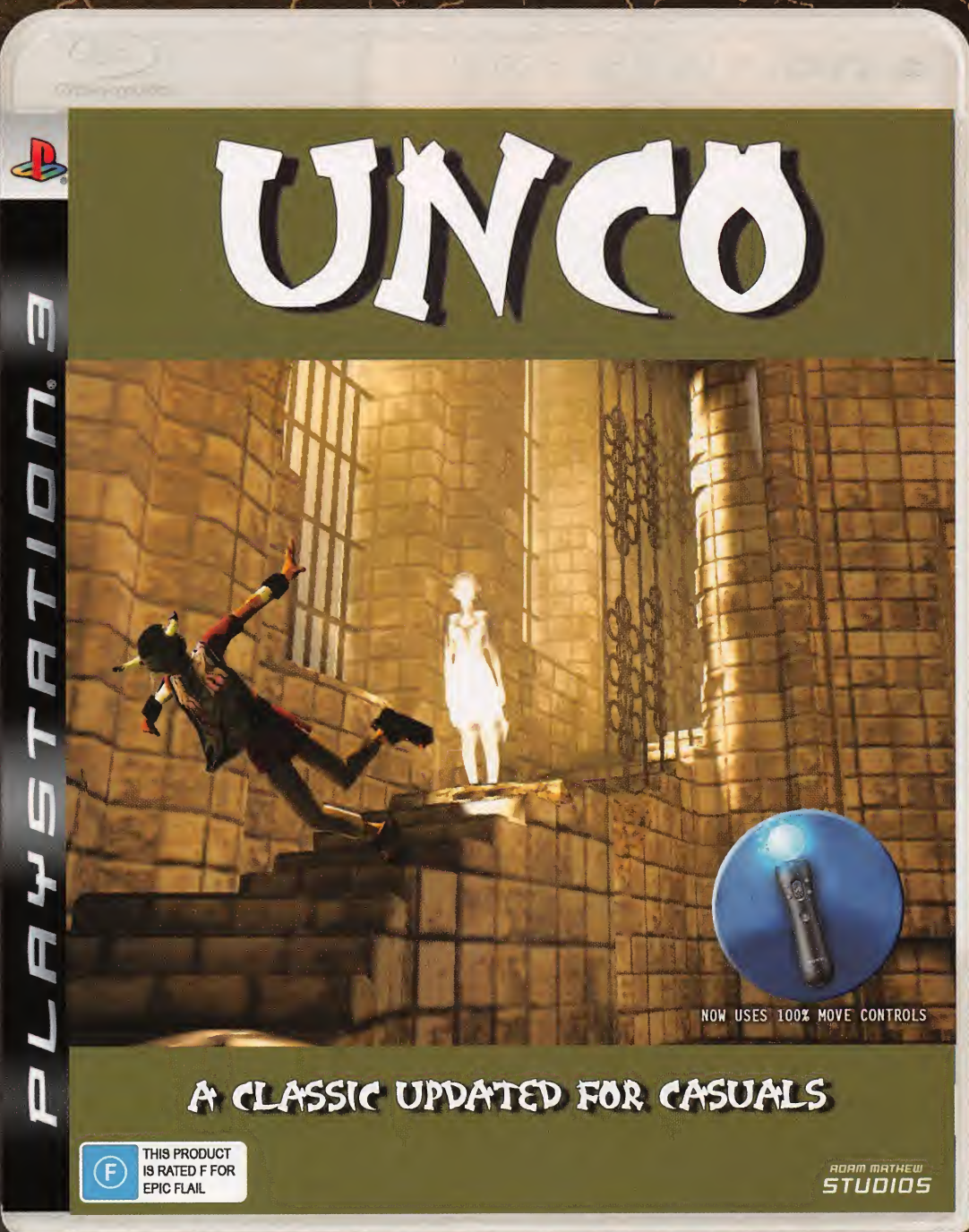
It's Adam's nature to look to the future in all things. He has almost constant visions of approaching Friday afternoons and the pub.

Want to hear more of the OPS team disagreeing with each other? Check out our Podcast available on side B of our cover disc. Want to get into a great debate with one of us, or a fellow reader? Hop onto www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia and make your case. The best topics may find their way into the magazine.

STUMBLE
INTO
ADVENTURE!

insane

IT SHOULD BE A GAME!



AWESOME balance mechanics
that RIVAL the Sixaxis for fun



AUTHENTIC waggle platforming now
makes you and Ico EXHAUSTED



AWKWARD 1:1 horse rides with
THIS GUY now feel EXTRA CREEPY



Around the World in PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



▲ DEVELOPERS DISAPPEARING

🇬🇧 LONDON, ENGLAND

It seems games development isn't shining bright all over the world, particularly across the pond in the less sunny parts of the commonwealth. The UK has shown that the total amount of games development staff has dropped by nine per cent since 2008, despite generating hits such as *F1 2010* and *Enslaved*. Currently the UK is home to 9010 developers. We're hopeful one day our local developers can afford to house so many. With Krome studios recently shutting down we imagine our numbers are dwindling.



▲ PIRATES EVERYWHERE

🇪🇸 MADRID, SPAIN

The Spanish rights-owner pressure group Coalition of Content Creators and Industries (*SroppgCoCCaI* has a better ring in our opinion) has found that in the first half of 2010 Spanish piracy cost the entertainment industry more than €5.2 Billion: a cost more than three times that of business generated by legitimate downloads. The study incorporates all forms of piracy including music, movies and games. A worrying conclusion compared to a previous comparison claiming that the ratio in Spain was closer to one to one.



▲ THINK OF THE CHILDREN

🇬🇧 LONDON, ENGLAND

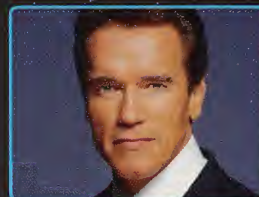
Finally it seems some of the big wigs are fighting on our side. The president of Eidos aka Square Enix Europe, Ian Livingstone, has been very busy working up some research studies for the government regarding games. It seems that 62 per cent of the parents polled believed that video games provided a good career opportunity for their children. This study is aimed at increasing support for the games industry and training within the UK. Fingers crossed that the rest of Ian's studies turn out to be just as positive as these results.



▲ GREAT SCOTS

🇸🇬 FIFE, SCOTLAND

Have you ever wanted to go invisible and just never figured out how to do it? Well ponder no more. A team of physicists at Scotland's University of St Andrews have made some remarkable breakthroughs, bringing us closer to being invisible. Using an amazing new material called meta-flex the team claims to be able to hide objects from visible light thus making them invisible. We will know they have succeeded if there is an unexplained rise in unsolved crime surrounding St Andrew's university in the coming weeks. Do want. Now.



▲ CALIFORNIA'S DREAMING

🇺🇸 SACRAMENTO, USA

Considering Arnold is considered a man of extreme action and violence, it seems the state he is governing is not. A recent game bill submitted to the Supreme Court has been met with extreme skepticism. The aim of the bill would likely restrict the sales of "excessively" violent video games being sold to minors within the state of California. What the bill failed to mention in detail was what "Excessive Violence" actually was and why this rule would only apply to video games and not to movies or comic books. Bizarre.

INTERNATIONAL TOP 10 CHARTS

🇪🇺 EUROPE



- 1 **FIFA Soccer 11** EA Sports
- 2 **PES 2011** Konami
- 3 **Medal of Honor** EA
- 4 **Star Wars: TFU II** LucasArts
- 5 **Fallout: New Vegas** Bethesda Softworks
- 6 **WWE Smackdown Vs. Raw 2011** THQ
- 7 **Sports Champions** SCE
- 8 **The Sims 3** EA
- 9 **James Bond 007: Blood Stone** Activision
- 10 **F1 2010** Codemasters

🇯🇵 JAPAN



- 1 **Winning Eleven 2011** Konami
- 2 **Fallout: New Vegas** Bethesda Softworks
- 3 **Naruto Shippuden: Narutimate Storm 2** Namco Bandai
- 4 **Vanquish** Sega
- 5 **Beat Sketch!** SCE
- 6 **Medal of Honor** EA
- 7 **Red Dead Redemption** Take Two Interactive
- 8 **FIFA 11: World Class Soccer** EA
- 9 **Gekijouban Macross: Itsuwarino Utahime** Namco Bandai
- 10 **Big 3 Gun** Namco Bandai

🇺🇸 USA



- 1 **Sports Champions** SCE
- 2 **Fallout: New Vegas** Bethesda Softworks
- 3 **Medal of Honor** EA
- 4 **Star Wars: TFU II** LucasArts
- 5 **Madden NFL 11** EA Sports
- 6 **GTA IV** Rockstar
- 7 **FIFA Soccer 11** EA Sports
- 8 **NBA 2K11** 2K Sports
- 9 **WWE Smackdown Vs. Raw 2011** THQ
- 10 **James Bond 007: Blood Stone** Activision

THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!

Nov 18

Assassin's Creed Brotherhood

If you haven't grabbed your copy of *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood* yet, you better crawl out from under your rock and go get it. The third part of the *Assassin's Creed* series, *Brotherhood* introduces a brand new single-player mechanic - the BAM - and some awesome online multiplayer.



Nov 25

NBA JAM

Have you experienced *NBA Jam*'s wacky wild basketball fun? Have you ever scanned eBay for a good copy of *NBA Jam Tournament Edition* to relive the dream? Well scan no more! *NBA Jam* is back in HD, as wild, wacky and fun as it was.

Dec 8

Inception

One of the most anticipated movies of 2010, Christopher Nolan's latest masterpiece warps time, dreams and folds cities in on themselves in this blockbuster hit that's out now on Blu-ray, DVD and PSN.



Dec 10

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader

Let's be honest here. There's been no other Hollywood movie that's given you what you really wanted: bear chariots. Four magnificent (CGI) beasts lashed to a chair on sleds. Oh, and it's the third part in the *Chronicles* saga.

Dec 16-19

Australia Vs England

Well we all know how the first match of the series went. Australia's second match of the Ashes kicks off for the pre-Christmas extravaganza. Make sure you are wearing your green and gold and show those Poms who's best.



Dec 17

Tron: Legacy

Book your tickets now for a movie night that you won't forget. *Tron* tells a story of a young game developer who needs to fight the institution in order to gain the recognition he deserves. Oh YES! there will be tears. Digital ones.



Dec 26

Boxing Day

Step One: go and get full refunds on all the gifts you don't like

Step Two: purchase the games you do want.



Dec 27

Escape summer

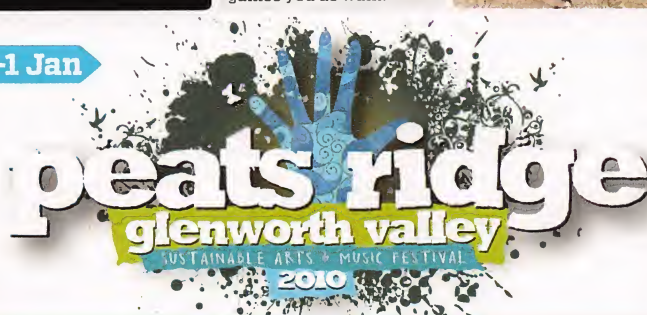
Relax and escape the summer heat in a large air conditioned room. Your local cinema's the best place, with new releases like *Little Fockers*, *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Tourist*.



Peats Ridge

Dec 29-1 Jan

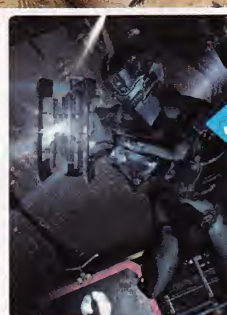
What better way to spend your new years holiday than to use three days listening to over 120 artists from around the world including latest Arias winners "Angus and Julia Stone". For more information check out peatsridgefestival.com.au



Jan 27

Dead Space 2

Isaac Clarke returns to the Necromorph nightmare, half insane and mad as hell. Still looks good in an exo-skeleton suit, though.



Can't miss...

GRAN TURISMO®
THE REAL DRIVING SIMULATOR

5

Gran Turismo 5
NOVEMBER 25

It's here. *Finally*. More than five years in development, with over 1000 cars, and hundreds and hundreds of hours of gameplay. The most anticipated release of the year. We hope you booked holidays.

Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

OUT NOW

Call of Duty: Black Ops **p60**
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision

SAW II: Flesh & Blood
Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape

Time Crisis: Razing Storm
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony

Need for Speed Hot Pursuit **p70**
Genre: Racing Distributor: EA

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows
Genre: Action Distributor: EA

Assassin's Creed Brotherhood **p66**
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft

Splatterhouse **p78**
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

EA Sports MMA **p75**
Genre: Fighting Distributor: EA Sports

Majin **p72**
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

NBA Jam
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA

Blood Stone 007 **p79**
Genre: Action Distributor: Activision

Prince of Persia Trilogy **p75**
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II **p74**
Genre: Action Distributor: Activision

Gran Turismo 5
Genre: Racing Distributor: Sony

TBC 2010

TRON: Evolution
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ
Date: TBC

JANUARY 2011

Dead Space 2
Genre: Action Distributor: EA
Date: January 27



Mass Effect 2 **p40**
Genre: Action RPG Distributor: EA Date: TBC

FEBRUARY 2011

Bulletstorm
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA Date: February 24

NASCAR 2011: The Game
Genre: Racing Distributor: Activision Date: TBC

"The NASCAR videogame fanbase has been underserved for a long time and we're bringing them something very special,"
David Oxford, Activision

de Blob 2
Genre: Platformer Distributor: THQ Date: TBC
This sequel to a niche game on Another Console will support Move.

MARCH 2011

Dragon Age II
Genre: Action RPG Distributor: EA
Date: March 10

Crysis 2
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA
Date: March 24

Final Fantasy XIV Online
Genre: RPG Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBC

APRIL 2011

Test Drive Unlimited 2
Genre: Racing Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: March 30
Set in Ibiza, the island from the original title will be available too. Now that's value for money.

Arcania: Gothic 4
Genre: RPG Distributor: AFA
Date: TBC

TBC 2011

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon
Genre: Flight Sim Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners
Date: TBC

Agent
Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar Date: TBC

Alice: Madness Returns
Genre: Action Distributor: EA
Date: TBC

Batman: Arkham City
Genre: Action Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBC

Bodycount
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBC

Brink
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBC

DC Universe Online
Genre: MMO Distributor: Sony
Date: TBC

"DC Universe Online is the first game of its kind, and a truly massive undertaking - the first truly action-based MMO, the first MMO on the PlayStation 3, and the first time the entire DC Universe will be playable by the millions of fans who are eagerly anticipating its release. As the game heads into external beta testing, this extra time will allow us to address community feedback in a meaningful way." **John Smedley, President, Sony Online Entertainment**

Deus Ex: Human Revolution
Genre: Shooter/RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBC

Dirt 3
Genre: Racing Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBC
The latest in the franchise will have over 50 years of rallying history within it. We're still expecting Ken Block to feature.

DmC
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ
Date: TBC

Driver: San Francisco
Genre: Racing Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBC

Duke Nukem Forever **p10**



Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K
Date: TBC

Did you know that in this game you can pick up poo from a dunny and toss it at a wall? You do now!

El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron
Genre: Action Distributor: TBC
Date: TBC

F.E.A.R. 3
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBC

Fight Night Champion
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA
Date: TBC

Homefront **p42**
Genre: Shooter Distributor: THQ
Date: TBC

Hunted: The Demon's Forge
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBC

inFAMOUS 2
Genre: Action Distributor: Sony
Date: TBC

L.A. Noire
Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar
Date: TBC

The Last Guardian **p43**
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony
Date: TBC

The Lord of the Rings: War in the North
Genre: RPG Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBC

► Pre-order

DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

Tanner's back. Take to the streets of San Francisco in the hunt for Jericho, your arch villain, in over 100 different cars. Using a unique 'shift' feature, *Driver: San Francisco* promises to be the ultimate car chase game, with the iconic city as your playground for action.

Collector Pack includes:

- 1970 Dodge Challenger R/T model
- Map of San Francisco
- Two in-game vehicles

EB GAMES \$108
Estimated dispatch date: TBA 2011

GAME \$128
Estimated dispatch date: TBA 2011
Special Offer: Driver fuzzy dice



Marvel vs Capcom 3:

Fate of Two Worlds

Genre: Fighting **Distributor:** THQ

Date: TBC

Capcom's Christian Svensson is expecting extremely strong sales for *Marvel vs. Capcom 3* thanks to the fact that it "has been by far, our most requested sequel title in my tenure here at Capcom."

Max Payne 3

Genre: Action **Distributor:**

Rockstar **Date:** TBC

Metal Gear Solid: Rising

Genre: Action **Distributor:**

Mindscape **Date:** TBC

Michael Jackson: The Experience

Genre: Music **Distributor:** Ubisoft

Date: TBC

Mortal Kombat P48

Genre: Fighting **Distributor:**

Warner Bros. **Date:** TBC

NBA Elite 11

Genre: Sports **Distributor:** EA

Date: TBC

Wedbush Morgan analyst Michael Pachter believes EA would lose 1.1 million sales due to *NBA Elite 11*'s recent delay and reduced the company's holiday quarter earnings estimate by US\$60 million.

Operation Flashpoint: Red River

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Namco

Bandai Partners

Date: TBC

Portal 2

Genre: Puzzle **Distributor:** EA

Date: TBC

Gabe Newell announced that the PS3 version will connect to Steam for updates, and will be the "best version" of the game. Mods as well, Gabe?

RAGE

Genre: Adventure **Distributor:**

Date: TBC

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

Genre: Platformer **Distributor:** Sony

Date: TBC

Red Faction: Armageddon

Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ

Date: TBC

► Pre-order

DRAGON AGE II

Experience the epic sequel to the 2009 Game of the Year from the critically acclaimed makers of *Dragon Age: Origins*. You are one of the few who escaped the destruction of your home. Now, forced to fight for survival in an ever-changing world, you must gather the deadliest of allies, amass fame and fortune, and seal your place in history.

Signature Edition includes:

- *Dragon Age II*
- In-game digital armoury
- Bonus character and missions
- Downloadable game soundtrack

EB GAMES \$108
Estimated dispatch
date: 10/03/2011 (web
only price)

GAME \$99
Estimated dispatch
date: 10/03/2011 (web
only price)

JB HIFI \$99
Estimated dispatch
date: March 2011



Resistance 3

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Sony

Date: TBC

Spec Ops: The Line

Genre: Action **Distributor:** 2K

Date: TBC

Street Fighter X Tekken

Genre: Fighting **Distributor:** THQ

Date: TBC



Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon:

Future Soldier

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Ubisoft

Date: TBC

Tony Hawk Shred

Genre: Sport **Distributor:** Activision

Date: TBC

True Crime: Hong Kong

Genre: Action **Distributor:**

Activision **Date:** TBC

Virtua Tennis 4

Genre: Sports **Distributor:** SEGA

Date: TBC



Mass Effect 2

► Collector's Edition

DEAD SPACE 2

In *Dead Space 2* engineer Isaac Clarke returns for another blood-curdling adventure in the sequel to the critically acclaimed *Dead Space*. After waking from a coma on a massive space city known as "The Sprawl", the lone survivor of a horrific alien infestation finds himself confronting a catastrophic new nightmare.

Collector's Edition includes:

- *Dead Space 2* & *Dead Space Extraction*
- Replica Plasma Cutter
- Access to Isaac Unitology Suit & Force Gun
- *Dead Space 2* Soundtrack
- Rare Necromorph Lithograph

EB GAMES \$128
Estimated dispatch date:
TBA Jan 2011 (web only
price, may be different
instore)

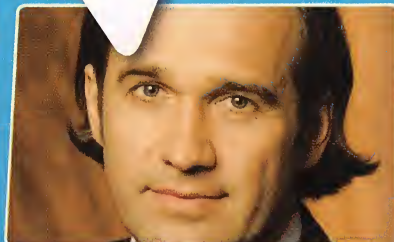
JB HIFI \$129
Estimated dispatch date:
TBA Jan 2011

GAME \$129.95
Estimated dispatch date:
TBA Jan 2011



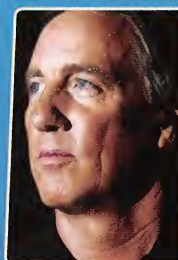
In their WORDS

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"We have a number of businesses where the performance is not what we'd like it to be."

Activision/Blizzard CFO **Thomas Tipl**, apparently unhappy not everything sells like *Call of Duty*



"Where it's going to be is in the play experience; richer stories, better characters, production values that are much more like movies."

THQ president **Brian Farrell**, blissfully

unaware it's hard to eat popcorn and hold a controller at the same time

"Some of the Grimm's fairy tales are quite grim, to tell you the truth... Are you going to ban them too?"



Justice **Antonin Scalia** to California attorney general **Zackery Morazzimi**, who was arguing for a law that would make it a crime to sell violent games to minors



"Magic can happen when there are no middle men, no marketers, and no naysayers."

And then you end up in an underwater city shooting bees from your wrists. Thanks **Ken Levine**

THE HEART AND SOLE OF GAMES DESIGN

A QANTM student's reasons for why it takes more than a rocket launcher to be successful

If you asked me 10 years ago what was the best thing about my favourite game I would've said the rocket launcher.

I knew I wanted to be a games designer and I filled up my spare time away from games writing up plans for new ones. I remember I came up with 50 innovative new rocket launcher variants. My rocket launchers were going to be industry defining. They were going to be my ticket to the big time. Gaming's most unflappable kingpins would quiver in glee as they pored over my schematics. I was set to be a games designer!

Except it's not really about the rocket launcher. Fact is there's a lot more a successful games designer has to think about.

There are many crucial facets to games design that are often overlooked by many gamers. We never really notice them until they're missing.

Think of a shoe. It may be the trendiest shoe in the world, but you won't notice it's badly designed until it's on your foot.

So if games design is a shoe then good communication is the padded sole. The most grievous design flaws often come from overlooking, neglecting or miscommunicating what the player

needs to know.

A player should always know what they can do within a game. We're talking about fundamentals here – knowing the stuff that is vital to progressing in the game. For instance, if climbing walls is a major mechanic this should be introduced to the player in a way that lets them know it's possible, and how to do it.

This includes controls. Good control design is often overlooked and bad controls can ruin an otherwise fantastic game. Controls should be simple, intuitive and customisable.

Likewise, a player should always know what they cannot do in a game. The rules and boundaries of the game should be clearly defined. Players should know where the game world ends and what objects can be interacted with, and in what way. Think of *Tomb Raider*; there's at least one point in every game where you waste half an hour watching a heavily-bosomed missile make craters in the ground by trying to grab a high ledge you're just not meant to.

A player should always know what they should do. Getting hopelessly lost, stuck or confused is one of the most frustrating experiences. A player should be gently guided through the game. Take the simple problem of guiding a player through a labyrinth to their next objective. You can be blunt and leave a set of arrows and/or signposts pointing in the right direction, or be subtler and use a particular lighting effect to show the proper path. The beauty of this issue is its potential for creative solutions.

This also touches on interface design. A good interface should allow a player to get from any one screen to any other within a few clicks. A menu system players get lost in is a big no-no.

Finally the focus should always be on the player. Games are a very narcissistic experience and I think that's what players secretly enjoy about them. However, they are also somewhat narcissistic for the designer too (just think of 50 rocket launchers), and sometimes that narcissism intrudes upon the design. The ultimate example is the unskippable cut scene. Yes, the story might be great, but no

one wants to watch the same cinematic 20 times in row. Creating a focused, positive player experience should be the heart of the game.

That's not to say 50 rocket launchers are a bad thing. Every game needs to have its unique touch, its core mechanic. That's what's going to make people play it. But it also needs its heart and sole. 

“Bad controls can ruin an otherwise fantastic game”



OPINION
Petr Joura

Fact: this is not a misspelling. In his spare time, Petr goes through *Borderlands* and counts just how many rocket launchers you can fit on one disc.

3D Animation
Graphic Design
Games Programming

QANTM COLLEGE

DIPLOMA & DEGREE
COURSES IN:

Games Design
3D Animation
Graphic Design
Games Programming
Digital Video Production
Web Design & Development

ENROL NOW FOR 2011

FEBRUARY 14TH & SEPTEMBER 12TH START DATES

1300 136 933

WWW.QANTM.COM.AU

Brisbane | Sydney | Melbourne

Qantm CRICOS codes - 03204G (QLD) 00312F (NSW) 02047B (VIC)



qantm
COLLEGE





THE RISE OF THE INBETWEENERS

With *Costume Quest*, we see the dawn of a new genre of gaming.

Costume Quest is charming, funny, and finds a good balance between accessibility and JRPG-style depth. It's also short. Really short — in a three-legged race it would pair well with *Portal*. At the price Double Fine is asking, it doesn't seem like terribly good value. Why, a punter could be forgiven for thinking that there is no place in the world for a game like *Costume Quest*. That like the spawn of horse and donkey, it is a crime against nature — a sterile half-breed that has no future.

But the truth is that it fulfills a vital evolutionary role. Gamers are changing, and the industry must adapt to service them. Yes, there are still those who crave online shooters, and stat-heavy sports sims, and driving games, and all the other genres that we know and love. The *SOCOMs*, the *FIFAs*, and the *GTs* will always be here for them. But other demographics are emerging, too. There are hard-core gamers, and casuals... but there are others, too. These 'In-Betweeners' demand quality, but in a more specialised form.

Another creator we need to champion is Peter Molyneux, and his latest title on Another Console that has been criticised for its low difficulty and simplistic gameplay. But it is not a game designed for time-rich teens with pumalike reflexes. It is a game for those who have fond memories of hard-core gaming marathons, but whose limited free time, advancing years, and high blood alcohol levels prevent them from matching the feats of their long-departed youth.

Molyneux deserves more credit. He's making a product for a specific type of gamer: the aging

gamer. If that isn't you, you shouldn't take it as a personal insult.

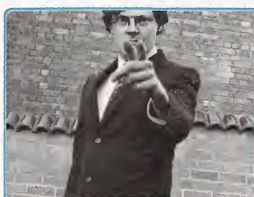
Likewise, *Costume Quest* may play a bit like a JRPG, but it is not for JRPG fans. Games like *Final Fantasy* are designed to be good value for Asperger's sufferers who never leave their rooms. *Costume Quest* is designed for urban hipsters who ride fixed-wheel bikes between their bespoke gallery openings, boutique micro-brew tastings, and ironic warehouse parties. Believe it or not, there are those who have played *Portal*, but 'never got around to finishing' the three-hour game. They're too busy living their lives.

And the price? This is an inevitable by-product of any game with niche appeal. The fewer people you sell something to, the worse the economies of scale. A suit from a tailor costs more than one off the rack at Lowes, and pound for pound, Double Fine games cost more than Activision's fare. But price and value are two different things. Or to put it another way, who would you rather party with: Tim Schafer, or Bobby Kotick?

Psychonauts, for all its genius, sold poorly at retail. There was a market for it, but conventional mass production was the wrong way to reach it. If *Psychonauts* had been launched as a downloadable game right from the start, then who knows — it may have actually made money.

Those hipsters in their fruity little fedoras may not be like you, or anyone you know, but they have just as much a right to enjoy life as anyone else. And if that means a few more games on the PlayStation Store that are short, beautiful, and slightly overpriced, then we'll all just have to cope. Deal with it. ♪

“Gamers are changing, and the industry must adapt to service them”



OPINION
James Cottey

James Cottey has played *Monster Hunter* for more hours than you've slept in your bed.

メリークリスマス!

(MERRY CHRISTMAS!)

THANK YOU SANTA! MY ANIMATED FAVOURITES!



▲ DRAGONBALL Z REMASTERED UNCUT COMPLETE COLLECTION



▲ HALO LEGENDS



▲ NARUTO COMPLETE COLLECTION



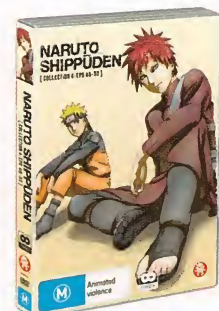
▲ EDEN OF THE EAST SERIES COLLECTION



▲ SENGOKU BASARA (SAMURAI KINGS) SEASON 1 COLLECTION



▲ VAMPIRE KNIGHT VOLUME 1 WITH LIMITED COLLECTOR'S BOX



▲ NARUTO SHIPPUDEN COLLECTION 4



▲ EVANGELION: 1.11 YOU ARE (NOT) ALONE.



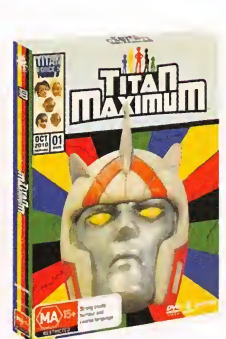
▲ DRAGON BALL Z KAI COLLECTION 2



▲ NAUSICAÄ OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND



▲ METALOCOLYPSE SEASON 3



▲ TITAN MAXIMUM SEASON 1

AVAILABLE NOW ON DVD & BLU-RAY

Gametraders
United in play

JB HI-FI
ALWAYS CHEAPEST PRICES

*While stocks last

FOR FREE STREAMING EPISODES, GALLERIES AND HEAPS MORE ON ANIME VISIT MADMAN.COM.AU

MADMAN



YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG

Why four out of five gamers played *Mass Effect 2* wrong and how this is our chance to make things right

So the highly acclaimed space epic *Mass Effect 2* is making its way to PlayStation 3, ending well over 12 months of speculation about the exclusivity of the once Xbox- and PC-only series.

That's old news now.

What I've just realised, however, is that thanks to the long wait for the game to jump ship we can learn from the mistakes of our peers.

You see, in September BioWare released a wide array of *Mass Effect 2* gameplay statistics. Tracking how many people start and finish the game (over 50 per cent) or how many conversations were skipped (less than 15 per cent) will prove useful to BioWare in the future in allocating resources.

However, one statistic stood out from the rest. A massive 80 per cent of gamers played *Mass Effect 2* as a man.

This is a huge mistake.

For the purposes of a broad gaming diet I've played this series already. I began my first play through as Scarlett Shepard – a petite, ginger-haired firecracker who made up for her small stature with her unbridled bravado and her business-like vocabulary (which consisted mainly of fightin' words).

It's true that I only chose to begin the game with a female lead because of the promise of some same-sex shenanigans later on. What I didn't expect, however, is just how much I would come to admire her.

Scarlett Shepard was an incredible character. She was like Captain Janeway crossed with Clint Eastwood. She had authority, she had skills and she didn't take any shit, from anyone, ever. By the time Scarlett was ready to hop on the good foot and do the bad thing with a blue-skinned alien babe I was completely in love with her. By the end of the game I was convinced that female Shepard was the greatest female character in videogames.

“A massive 80 per cent of gamers played *Mass Effect 2* as a man”

Like Ellen Ripley of the *Alien* film franchise FemShep (as she's known on the web) challenges gender stereotypes. BioWare has more or less done this by accident, because the script is the same whether you're a man or a woman. What it means, however, is that by choosing to play as a woman in *Mass Effect* you're placing a woman in a role written with a man in mind. FemShep, then, is a female videogame character who isn't defined by her tits or by her relationship with the men around her.

FemShep, rather, is defined by her actions. These actions involve being an intergalactic badarse and saving the f—king universe.

I thought I'd start over with a male character. It didn't work. I

nearly died of boredom and simply went back to Scarlett.

Both *Mass Effect* and *Mass Effect 2* are really two games in one. The games feel entirely different based on the gender you choose before the

game begins. One story is about an unlikely female spaceship commander who single-handedly cements humanity's place within a fickle galaxy with her incredible bravery and unwavering determination. The other story revolves around an uninteresting, male jock who we've played as a million times before.

There is more to it than simply the fascinating novelty of having a woman in a non-traditional role. Again, it's only a side effect of the role being meant for a man but when FemShep wades in to save the day nobody is surprised she's a woman. It's precisely because *Mass Effect* doesn't make a fuss out of the fact Shepard is a woman when you play as one that it's so interesting.

Besides, at the end of the day, who would you rather see kick a thug out of a high-rise window? A generic meathead or a feisty, redheaded lesbian space commando?

Come January, you know what to do. ♫



OPINION
Angry Sackboy

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist who is all about the ladies. Especially space ladies.



Chicken that passes more than the taste test.

We're not chicken in revealing where we source our poultry. It comes from the same quality suppliers you're used to buying your own chook from. Our chicken range is supplied by trusted brands like Ingham and Steggles, which means no hormones are added. Leaving you with nothing but the most delicious chicken around.



In New Zealand, suppliers are Ingham and Tegel.



inbox



▼ LETTER OF THE MONTH

BUDDY SYSTEM

Hey OPS,
I have just started reading the inbox and the incessant whining about online gaming just forced me to whack on the laptop and write in.

I used to agree with the sentiment that online competitive sucked. I would run around, get my head shot off 50 times for one kill and yeah I didn't have that much fun. I always blamed lag, server speed, me being a low level or cheaters for my abysmal showings and so consequently stuck to online co-op. *Resistance 2* and *Borderlands* were my gaming nirvana.

That all changed when I started playing *MAG*, I couldn't blame servers as they had dedicated servers apparently for our region so I gave it a go. I should point out that when I play local multiplayer, I usually am the annoying one constantly winning so I kind of expected to do the same online. I was wrong. I sucked but I was a lower level so I grinded it out and got to the top level and I still wasn't doing that well.

If you're dying a multiple of times its usually because you don't understand the games and no one explains them to you apart from the woefully thin game manuals which tells you which buttons do what. Which is info that often isn't that useful at all.

The defining moment online for me, came when I got involved with a clan.

Online clans help you in many ways. A: you get the benefit of the guys who have played hundreds of hours who want you to do well because it helps them. B: It's social, you're no longer sitting on your couch alone swearing at the sniper shooting into your spawnpoint. C: it introduces an element of online co-op which is us against them because you feel like you always have backup. You can run into a crowded room and know that everyone will pick you up if you fall.

Yes, there are douchebags out there but you find them anywhere and you can always block them. My point is do not write off online competitive until you've taken full advantage of it. Join a clan and really begin to learn how to play the game.

James S, via email

Clans are the one thing that we didn't factor into our 'online can be annoying' equation. Being a part of a group of like-minded individuals can be one of life's best experiences.

There are pitfalls though, such as in-clan fighting, politics, the question of your 'dedication' to the team and how that affects the rest of your life. Avoid all that crap and clans can indeed rock.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A COPY OF:

COD: BLACK OPS

Congratulations James. We'll probably see you online!



Audio cue: a *Full House* audience going "awwww".

TRUST EXERCISE

Good day OPS,

Love the mag, especially after my morning coffee, sitting in my 'office' having some rare alone time from the family (too much info?).

But seriously, I have been a subscriber for well over a year now and it seems we have a similar interest and appreciation of games. In recent months you have reviewed *Medal of Honor*, *FIFA 11*, *Red Dead Redemption*, *God of War III*, and *Uncharted 2* to name but a few and if I was sitting in your shoes, I would have given these games the same score you did. The only disagreement I can think of is *Heavy Rain*, I thought that was simply a masterful and original game that we will talk about in the coming years, an absolute ten for me.

Then we have your preview articles about games like *Call of Duty: Black Ops*, *Need for Speed Hot Pursuit*, *Batman: Arkham City*, *Deus Ex* and *Brink*. Your articles about these games have left me salivating and pondering where my future gaming hours will come from to play these titles.

This got me thinking. What influence do you think you play on the gaming public? A bad review from OPS simply, in my mind, blacklists that game for all of eternity. Score a bronze and you might get a look in, a score less than that is not worth the time in my busy schedule of juggling family, work and play.

Then I got to thinking, what depths do developers stoop to in order to get a good review in this day and age of a flooded gaming market? What bribes are offered to reviewers... and taken?

Dallas Werder, via email

Thanks for the letter Dallas. Honestly, we never really think about how much clout we have when it comes to swaying people on what game they purchase, nor do we allow ourselves to be influenced by advertising or external 'suggestions' from games publishers.

All we ever focus on is spitting out an honest appraisal of the game that's in front of us and the experience it represents. We realise that the faith you readers place in us is a sacred thing and – though it sounds like a *big ball of corn* on paper – we'd never think of betraying that trust.

We're pretty tight with a large cross-section of Aussie games reviewers (be they online or print) and we haven't heard of anybody being 'bought' for a better review. Such a thing would be insanely difficult to hide, would get exposed in a heartbeat and end in a pantsing of epic proportions for the greedy opportunist responsible. Rest assured, the system works.

NOT HAPPY, JAN

Hey OPS,

I am writing to you to vent my anger with on a few things, namely the PSN+ and of course the beta for *Killzone 3*.

Yes, some may say "sour grapes, get over it" but I got the PSN+ within weeks of it coming out mainly due to the fact that I (thought) I would be helping Sony. I also did it to get access to some early betas on certain games that I like, etc.

I got sent a questionnaire about a month after I joined and one of the main questions

Speak to us!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Citrus Media
PO Box 20154
World Square,
NSW 2002

...email...
ops@citrusmedia.com.au

...and also on Facebook!
facebook.com/
OPSAustralia



"No way! Me and Grandpa Joe are gonna teabag noobs"

"I am writing to you to vent my anger on a few things"

was: did you join to get early access to beta's. Answer: yes.

So when the beta came up on Killzone 3, I thought "great, I am in for this, this is why I joined". I downloaded the theme as soon as it came out and waited for the 25/10/2010. I then waited and waited and, yep, no beta code.

Now I hear that people who didn't even bother to pay for PSN + will get it via some twitter program. What a joke, what about the members who have paid for a premium service? They should get first choice. I paid A\$70.00 for this and so far got back zero dollars in services for it.

The service itself is doesn't really offer anything I really want, unless you want a load of old PS1 or PS2 games or themes. I was a mug to believe Sony on this and unless something is done to sway my opinion, I will not renew it and just play the service for free. I'll just pick what I want, when I want it from the PSN store.

David Barrett, via email

We feel your pain David, we even had a few people send us emails trying to get access to the Killzone 3 beta. Note for the future: don't do that, we really, really don't have any. Even if you do promise to 'return our turtle alive and well', we can't get 'em.

PSN+ does warrant the extra moolah, if you're after something other than 'guaranteed access to betas' which just isn't in the fineprint. At all.

Unfortunately, the Killzone 3 beta was a bit of a Charlie and the Chocolate Factory situation. Everybody wanted those golden tickets, but only a core handful of undeserving, spoiled brats won them. Kidding. They were all lovable little online scamps (until they teabagged us).

Take it from us, seeing a game in beta ruins its mystique. Wait out for the polished, finished product and you'll appreciate it much, much more.

THE PEACEWALKER

Dear OPS,

My name is Ryan and I am sixteen years old. Like you guys I have a passion for gaming and would one day like to be a games journalist too. Aspirations aside, let's get down to business. Now, I am aware that I may be writing my own death notice by sending this to a PlayStation exclusive magazine but here goes.

From rantings on the internet and heated arguments at school over which console reigns supreme I have come to believe we are all part of a war. We all pick a side and fight seemingly to the death

for our chosen faction. We use stats and statistics we don't understand as artillery (honestly, how many of us can actually say we really know the difference between the PS3's and 360's processor, or what 1.8 TFLOPS floating point performance is?).

I don't understand the necessity of this violent conflict, so I call for a peace treaty. Do we back our consoles persistently to justify our purchase? In the back of our mind do we truly know that each console provides superior services to their competitors in certain aspects?

While the PlayStation has an incredibly strong catalogue of exclusives and Blu-ray support, Xbox fares remarkably well with its online services (although it is a compulsory subscription-based product, you get what you pay for), or the Wii has a tendency to bring people together in a positive, high-spirited environment. We must understand that each console caters to the needs of a different gamer. The Xbox targets the online-centric gamer through its online features, whilst the PlayStation primarily

targets the single-player demographic – evident through titles such as *God of War*, *Heavy Rain* or *Infamous*. Nintendo blatantly goes after the casual audience.

With the defining features of each console beginning to overlap I am concerned that this war will escalate. I say rather than worry what console the other guy has, we should see a passion for gaming as something we have in common and we should let it bring us together, rather than drive us apart. Games are games, and anyone that respects games as a creative outlet and form of entertainment will respect them regardless of their choice of home.

So here are the terms of my treaty: we respect the consoles, we respect the games: We respect each other, as gamers Who's with me?

P.S. The caption guy needs a raise.

Ryan Joseph, via email

Boldly said, Ryan. Though many of us may not agree with you on the technical accuracy of your arguments, your core message of gamer tolerance is welcome here at OPS.

Even still, brand preference has always been, and will continue to be. It's just tribalism; a basic human need to root for your own team while hurling crap at the rival cavemen (who waggle bits of stick about like fools, or have dodgy fires that extinguish themselves one day after warranty). Pffft, savages.

You are right about another thing though; everything is overlapping. Ideas and innovations are being 'shared' between the three big players, and all of us, the players, are reaping the rewards of three worlds.

Our advice: fling some good-natured crap over the fence every once in a while for fun, and laugh at any rival cavemen who take your 'attack' seriously. It's all good.

Cuttings

► THE GROUCH

All sorted. I met a lovely rubbish bin. She meets the parents tonight.

Tiny Tim

via Facebook

We've lost count on how many trashbags we've taken out.

► PARCHED AS

Does anyone else suddenly get really, really thirsty when playing *Fallout 3*, or is it just me?

Kurt Bannister, via

Facebook

Just you. *New Vegas* makes us want to gamble and belt people with golf clubs.

► BEARD ENVY

Call of Duty: Black Ops can go straight to hell. Just did the first six missions on veteran difficulty and no trophies. I'm mad pissed.

Steven Laban,

via Facebook

Word. Stop being stingy with the trophies, games developers. There's no use in it. You're just going to make us mad, pissed or a curious combination of the two.

► DOCTOR, PLEASE

I call it blops. I have the blops.

Daniel Tomasi,

via Facebook

Er, you should probably get that checked out.

Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia on facebook®

▼ Storefront

What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Alex Olson-Young

FIFA 11

"because soccer CONSUMES MY LIFE!"



Blake Harrod

Fallout: New Vegas

"Was hoping the remnants of the team that did the original Fallouts and Obsidian would show Bethesda how it's done, and they totally did."



David Boland

Vanquish

"Just couldn't get enough of that hectic combat."



Cameron Mills

Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare

"Hands down the best DLC I have ever paid for: \$15.95 for basically a second game."



"It's that way to the pool!" "No, it's that way to the pool!" "No it's..."

Caption This ►

We also accept 'craptions'. Have a go!

We'd heard of 'semi-nude jousting' before, but wrote it off as Arthurian legend. Saed Batshon uncorrupted by our Maid Marion fantasies, had a much cleaner, funnier interpretation.

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

Get 12 issues for the price of 6!

► 100% Australian content. Unlike other "Australian" PlayStation magazines, **every page of OPS is written and designed in Australia** – not the UK – every single month.

► OPS Australia is the **definitive resource for all things PlayStation** – distilled into one regular, entertaining and informative package.

► Want **honest reviews, trusted opinion and exclusive previews** from award-winning local games journalists? Look no further! OPS is committed to providing its readers with the best games magazine in the country.

SAVE 50%
OFF THE NEWSSTAND PRICE

Never miss an issue!



Subscriber offer

Subscribe to Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia to win a **cool Splatterhouse prize pack!**



Thanks to Namco Bandai Partners, we have six *Splatterhouse* prize packs to give away to new subscribers!

Splatterhouse is the 21st Century re-imagining of a classic arcade title, packed with out-there hardcore action. College student Rick Taylor must rescue his girlfriend Jennifer, after a scientist, Dr. West, kidnaps her in a run-down mansion. Rick and Jen obviously haven't watched any horror movies else they'd be nowhere near it.

Now, with Dr. West's abominations surrounding him, Rick puts on a sentient mask that gives him the power to retrieve his loved one, and turns into

a powerful, musclebound being. The beasts had better watch out.

First prize gets a copy of the game, a pair of Globe/Splatterhouse shoes, a t-shirt and an extremely limited edition Globe/Splatterhouse skateboard, with a total value of \$500. Five runners up score a copy of the game and a Splatterhouse t-shirt, with a total value of \$100 each.

All you have to do for a chance to win one of those awesome prizes is subscribe to this magazine. You'll be saving money in the process, and assured a copy in the mail every month for the next 12 months.

Don't miss out!

Subscribe NOW!



4

easy ways to subscribe!



Call our Hotline
136 116 (and quote
code M1010PS)



Fax
(02) 9267 4363



Freepost the form to:
Official PlayStation
Magazine Subscriptions
Reply Paid 4967,
Sydney, NSW 2001



Online:
www.magshop.com.au

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM



Yes

I would like to subscribe to **Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia** starting with the next available issue.

1

Your details

Title ☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss

Name

Address

State Postcode

Email Address

Tel no. (inc. area code)

Why do you deserve Splatterhouse

2

Please tick one box

Australia

☐ \$89.45 for 12 issues **Save \$89.95 off cover price**

New Zealand

☐ AUD \$99.95 for 12 issues **Save \$103.45 off cover price**

International

☐ AUD \$159.95 for 12 issues **Save \$19.45 off cover price**

3

Method of payment

☐ **Cheque/Money Order** (Aust. only) made payable to ACP Publishing Pty Ltd.
(AUD\$ drawn on an Australian bank account)

☐ **Mastercard** ☐ **Visa**

Card No

□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□

Expiry date □□/□□

Card Holder Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature Date

Terms and conditions: Offer expires 19/01/2011. Prices include GST. Subscriptions start with the first available issue. This offer is open to Australian and New Zealand residents only (rates as detailed). All prices are quoted in Australian dollars. Savings are based on recommended retail price. This offer is not available in conjunction with any other offer. We are committed to handling your personal information in accordance with the privacy act. By including an email address you consent to receipt of any email regarding this magazine and other emails which inform you of relevant publications, products, services and events and to promote third party goods and services you may be interested in. If you would like to gain access to the information we hold about you please contact us at PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW, 2002. Competitions are open to residents of Australia and New Zealand whom subscribe to the magazine before 19/01/2011. Please note: subscriptions are not eligible for newsstand promotions.

☐ (Please tick if required). Please do not provide information about me to any organisation not associated with this offer.

Order Code: M1010PS

*Offer ends: 19/01/11

It's an EA Christmas!

Electronic Arts are one of the biggest games publishers in the world, and their experience and expertise means they know games and gamers. They're masters of many genres, showing off their strengths in the gripping shooter *Medal of Honor*, dominating arcade racers with *Need For Speed Hot Pursuit* and also refining the addictive life management aspects in *The Sims 3*. With a massive variety of quality titles out for Christmas from EA you're never far from having a good time in single player offline and online, and with your friends and family around your PS3.



Medal of Honor

This gritty reboot of the acclaimed series follows different groups of soldiers as they fight the Taliban in Afghanistan in covert missions and red-hot confrontations. Beyond the gripping single player campaign is an addictive multiplayer mode crafted by DICE, the team behind *Bad Company 2*.

Monopoly Streets

EA's reinvention of the classic board game keeps the charm of the original while giving you the flexibility to set your own rules. Available to play online or offline for up to four players the litany of new modes means no two games will be alike. Perfect for family grudge matches.



Need For Speed Hot Pursuit

It's cops versus racers in nitro-fuelled events, where it's not enough to just make it to the finish line – you have to take out the opposite side of the law. Brute force is necessary, and your glorious supercars are also equipped with tyre shredding spikes, EMP bolts and helicopter support. Utterly addictive and thrilling.



Rock Band 3

With a revamped range of Pro instruments available, Rock Band goes beyond mimicking rock n' rollers: it can teach you how to play guitar, drums and keyboard. It also has a crowd-pleasing 83 track setlist featuring tunes from The White Stripes, INXS, David Bowie and more. This is one to play loud!



The Sims 3

One of the biggest series in the world returns to PlayStation! Create your Sim, manage their life, and make it what ever you want it to be in their neighbourhood. It's packed with curveball humour, and the new Karma system in a streamlined design means you'll be playing this for a long time.

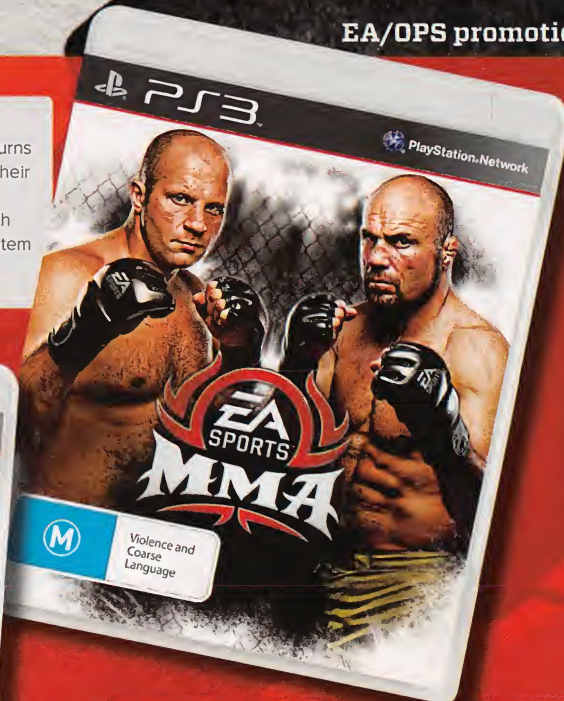


Hasbro Family Game Night Volume 3

Five classic Hasbro games have been made in HD, including The Game Of Life, Clue, Twister Moves, Mouse Trap and Yahtzee Hands Down. Mr. Potato head is your guide in this quintet of engaging games, and your progression and success unlocks unique costumes for the spud to use in game.

EA SPORTS Active 2

The most interactive fitness product made, EA Sports Active 2 comes with a heart-rate monitor that tracks on screen in real time and wireless motion sensor peripherals so that you can work out completely hands free. Loaded with more than 70 fun exercises and activities, this could be the life-changing fitness product you've been waiting for.



EA Sports MMA

The technical sport of Mixed Martial Arts has been made intuitive, but no less raw. Based on the excellent system used in their Fight Night series, EA Sports has created a strategic and fast-paced representation of the sport laced with personality. Build up your fighter, take him online and rule the ring from your lounge room.



Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1

The first part in the final two movies matches the onscreen antics, as Harry Potter and friends take the battle outside Hogwarts. Like the movie, the game's darker, more brutal and action-packed than previous Harry Potter titles. Fans, you will be surprised and enchanted. Prepare to be flex your skills.




FIFA 11

The football king returns and retains its crown as the best example of the beautiful game, and it'll keep both casual and hardcore fanatics hooked. Grab six mates and play a massive game around your console or go online for a huge 11 vs 11 friendly. Absolutely essential.







YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS, WE'VE GOT ANSWERS

52 games for the
next 52 weeks –
and these are
just the ones we
already know
about ►

How is LittleBigPlanet 2 going to let me be more creative?

"It's heartwarming seeing this stuff," says Media Molecule's Creative Director Mark Healey, talking about the exciting things he's seen in the *LBP2* beta. So, the buzz hasn't worn off yet. After a year and a half in development, what cool stuff can we do in the game that could end all games?

You can make your own games

In *LBP*, the focus was definitely on platforming and the world was viewed side-on in a mostly fixed 2D plane – though clever souls found ways to make shooters, rollercoasters, calculators and more. Now, though it's still what Creative Director Mark Healey describes as 2.5D, the camera can be shifted so that the background becomes a top-down view, with the 'ground' as a wall. Hello racing games. Hello RTS titles. You can now shift gravity so instead of falling down onto the ground it's so you're falling into the background.



The community is going to be huge

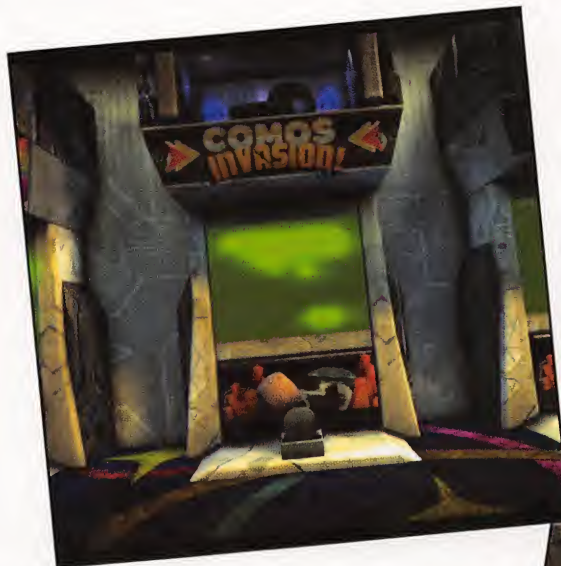
Say you have a vision: you want to make an entire platform game. Instead of booting people back to the hub world to search for your levels you can link them together using badges. At the end of your stage players can then warp to the next in line by jumping into a badge. Or, if you wanted to, you could make a whole bunch of levels and just make a stage that's like a level select – not just to your stages but to others that you like. Finding content is easier now with labels on stages, and player feedback from something as simple as 'I like this' to a full-blown review.

It's constantly surprising its own creators

The toolset Media Molecule has made isn't divided up into tools for shooter, tools for platforming etc: it's all "low level modular that can be used in ways we haven't thought about yet," says Healey. "There's a huge variation of madness that people are making in the beta already. We have a sequencer that can be used for music, but really for anything. Someone made an awesome level where the sound of a snare drum would light up a part of a platform. It was a really psychedelic experience. Some guy even went and made a 3D game that looks like *Flower!*"

There's just more stuff

There's a whole bunch of new assets. Media Molecule have crafted a new story and example games that use all the tools, and they're divided into themes that have their own set of assets. Rather than country themes – English, African etc. – the themes are more inspired by science, art, history. "There's just hundreds and hundreds more assets, and stickers alone could be a Clipart package. And there are new materials like holographic material, which can be turned off and on so you can make animations."



Duke Nukem Forever

We're intrigued to know exactly what happens to a game that's been in development for over a decade. We've seen bits, and Duke's machismo with toilet humour means this is very, very funny. Promising.



Dead Space 2

Isaac Clarke returns, half insane from the time exposed to the Marker. You'll play it for the amputation-centric combat (not as sadistic as it sounds) but will stay for the spine-chilling sound effects. Atmospheric.



Driver: San Francisco

This is a reboot we've been waiting for. Think freeform car chases, mad powerslides and lots and lots of boxes to bust through over the biggest suspension-breaking hills in the world. In-car view looks gloriously perilous.



Bulletstorm

Promises to do what it says on the tin, and very extravagant, though it'll have to carve out a good niche in the year of the shooter. Can it share the 'funny action' mantle with Duke? Make the action big and it'll succeed.



True Crime: Hong Kong

Mad undercover-cop action that smacks of influence from Jackie Chan movies and free-running bits of *Assassin's Creed*. We especially like that you can use cars as ramps on your motorbike. More games should do this!



NASCAR: The Game 2011

A tactical racer that relies on more than the driver's skills to win races, as you'll need your spotter to tell you when to block or bump someone out the way, and where to avoid accidents. Intense.



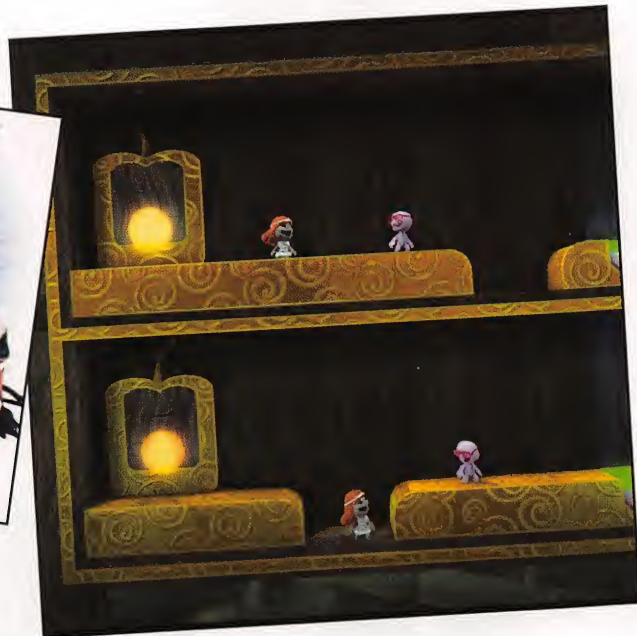
You can import your old levels...

So, even with this wealth of new stuff and mechanics making it happen, Media Molecule wants players to be able to use their old levels. Many basic materials from LBP have been implemented, and they took the framework from the first so none of your work is wasted. Says Healey, "There's bound to be a few teething problems but all the stuff we've tested is working fine."



...and your DLC

The amount of licensed DLC available isn't just going to be tossed out, so all those Marvel packs you downloaded can be transferred across to use in your homages to movies and other games. "When we do official packs," says Healey, "we explain [to the license holders] what they're letting themselves in for, and they know that. There are people have downloaded all the DLC and it'd be really annoying if you couldn't use it here."



It's more complicated, yet more streamlined

People who code will understand the equivalent of what the tools in LBP2 can do. But, the game's also been made more visual and more fun to create things. Instead of creating logic with clockwork mechanisms, logic – expertly displayed on the infamous 'calculator' level – can be mapped to a microchip, saving tonnes of space and headaches. Then there's the 'controlinator', a cockpit that Sackboy can jump into; like the microchips you can tinker around with the circuit board. But, the circuit board here looks like a SIXAXIS controller. Make a car, map ⓧ to accelerate, Ⓞ to your horn, and the motion sensing to steer for example: no more crazy buttons to jump on or levers to grab.



You can make movies

Just grab a Sackbot and make your own movies and machinima. Sackbots? They're like Sackboys, but they're programmed to do stuff. Like what? Whatever you want. Get a group and make them dance, but record it while you're doing it so that the 'animation' loops. Or give them some logic so that they interact with one another with speech bubbles. Dress them up and recreate *Casablanca* (we dare you). And, you can record your own voice now so you could give them lines and your Sackboy will lip-sync to your words.



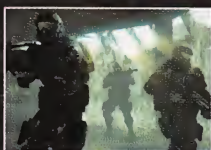
You now have competitive multiplayer modes

There's a new mode that incorporates competitive scoring. So if you're playing online with competitive scoring you can have diverging cameras – you no longer have to be on the same screen as your co-players. "You could make a death match arena, go online and people can be in different locations, trying to wipe each other out with the crazy weapons," says Healey. Though you're limited to four human players you can add in AI opponents to make the competition stiffer.



Sackboy's physical skills can be changed

Within the global controls of a level you can alter the strength of gravity so Sackboy's jump is as strong as you want it to be. You can also use a Sackbot to be your character, and can imbue the Bot with skills of its own – give it a jetpack if you wanted. You'll also be able to create a character that has double jump, wall jumping, the ability to run upside down, anything you want it to do. All it'll take is experimenting with the tools on offer.



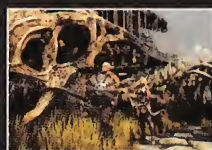
Crysis 2

In the running for 'best looking shooter of 2011' is the sequel to the infamous PC game. The setting's moved from the jungle to New York (can that city ever get a break?) but the focus remains on weapon customisation.



DC Universe Online

This MMO features your favourite (and some obscure) DC heroes and villains. Famous fictional cities like Gotham and Metropolis feature: we may actually settle the which is better Batman or Superman debate.



Hunted: The Demon's Forge

Dungeon crawling hack-and-slashers are about to get the kiss of life with this co-op focused title. He's a heavy hitter called Caddock, while she's a long-range expert called Elara. Looks pretty.



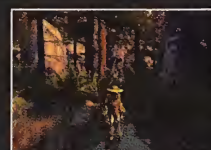
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

Invisible soldiers are the flavour of 2011. We love the art direction so far, and there are some pretty inventive ways of taking down your enemy. Shoulder mounted mortars? Yes, please.



Brink

A shooter that blends together free-running platforming elements and makes a brand-new genre. The multiplayer's already fantastic and we're just not sure how much more polish can be applied.



Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath

The 'is it dead, is it back' franchise from Lorne Lanning sets to strike PS3 with its creators sense of humour and art direction. If it has farting Mudokons in there, we're half-sold.

Why is Mass Effect 2 coming to PS3 such a big deal?

It's easy to be cynical about playing sloppy seconds with Microsoft with a 12-month old title but don't let a false sense of entitlement stand between you and this game. Here's why this space saga is a blessing.

It has an awesome lead character

The star of *Mass Effect 2* is Commander Shepard. The Shepard you'll more than likely see in every piece of promotional material is a generic meathead with closely cropped hair and a full face of Matthew Fox stubble. We're not talking about this Shepard. Read Angry Sackboy's rant on this matter for more insight, but *Mass Effect 2* has the best female lead in gaming. She's so many things the male Shepard is not. Plus, the default female Shepard always comes out looking like Julianne Nicholson, the unusually cute tiny redhead in *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*.

It's one of the best games of all time

That's not just marketing hyperbole. *Mass Effect 2* holds an average review score of 96 on Metacritic. Perhaps even more impressively its user score is 9.0 out of 10. This is notable because people with more time than sexual partners normally sabotage popular and otherwise good games with scores of zero to bring that average plummeting down. This phenomenon is the reason *GTAIV* has a Metacritic average of 98 and a user score of 7.4 and *Modern Warfare 2* has a Metacritic average of 94 and a user score of an embarrassing 5.7. *Mass Effect 2* has escaped the wrath of internet vigilantes and remains highly acclaimed by everyone with a pulse — critics and the public alike.

It's the most interesting sci-fi universe this side of Star Wars

Forget *Avatar*, the *Star Wars* of the 21st Century isn't a movie franchise. It's a game series. Specifically, this game series. BioWare has woven an intricate sci-fi universe together full of fascinating races and amazing technology. The fiction BioWare has crafted for the history of this future universe alone is nothing short of exhaustive. We could write you a giant essay detailing the events and themes of this epic space opera or you could just play it for yourself next month.

It's an action RPG with no concessions in either department

The action in RPGs that dabble with real-time third-person combat tends to feel limited and stilted. Similarly, action games that try to wedge basic RPG elements into proceedings often feel quite shallow. *Mass Effect 2* is neither. It's a deep role-playing experience with a vast slate of different endings, conversation trees and decisions to make. However, it's also a very robust shooter with a large arsenal of weapons and a wide variety of tactical options.



Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds

It's not often that we use the word 'spectacle' to describe a game, but it can be aptly applied here. This moves like a dream and will feature the coolest menagerie of playable fighters ever.



Red Faction: Armageddon

As gamers, the power of destruction has always been in our hand. *Red Faction Armageddon* boldly gives us the power to recreate, along with an alien smooching magnet gun. Bring this on.



Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

For those of you hanging out for either quality co-op or a stellar platformer, this should definitely fit the bill. Four-player fun is sure to abound here, along with some hilarious team-kill rortings.



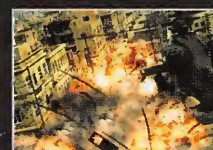
RAGE

The post apocalypse has never looked this beautiful before. We've seen this bad boy in the digital flesh and it seduced our eyes. But what really interests us are the *Mad Max* vehicular assault sections. One to watch.



Bionic Commando Rearmed 2

The best part of this sequel? The mechanics now rely on a button press to release your arm from its hold point, allowing much smarter use of swing momentum. About bloody time!



Ace Combat Assault Horizon

The trailer for this left us mesmerised, what with its depictions of the US Air Force engaged in dogfighting with what may be a Russian force over Miami. Sounds like our kind of vice.



The PS3 will get the best version

We've had to wait a year but at least the result will be we'll likely have access to all of the additional DLC that's been made available to Xbox 360 owners over the past 12 months. There's also some kind of additional material, possibly in the form of a prologue of some sort, to fill in the crucial back story from the original *Mass Effect* – the story that made Commander Shepard a legend in the first place.



Yvonne Strahovski is in it

Australian actress Yvonne Strahovski plays Miranda Lawson, a genetically engineered specimen of human perfection. Everything, from her intelligence, physical constitution, biotic abilities, to her appearance were designed before birth to be excellent. Sure, you get a glimpse of her undressing but what we like most is hearing a completely undisguised Aussie Strine amongst an almost exclusively American accented cast. And, yeah, you get a glimpse of her undressing.



Inter-species relations are encouraged

The first *Mass Effect* stirred up a shit-fight when it came to pass that BioWare had inserted a very soft sex scene into the third act to give fans of blue-skinned alien babes something to slam the ham over. *Mass Effect 2* doesn't shy away from promoting a little horizontal hustle between races either, although female Shepard players may be disappointed to know that same-sex hanky-panky has been pared back.



You'll care about your crew

Mass Effect 2 has a kind of *Ocean's Eleven* meets *The Dirty Dozen*. In space. You'll need to assemble a crack team of the galaxy's greatest warriors to take on a threat that threatens all sentient, organic life. Because the characters are all so interesting you'll probably find that you care about them more than you might think. It's crucial you gain their trust (and use their knowledge to upgrade your ship, the Normandy) before your final mission. Failure to do so will scratch some or even all of your new friends from your Christmas card list. You may not even make it back yourself.



Words speak as loud as action

Mass Effect 2 upstages the likes of *Metal Gear Solid 4* with talky-talky bits that won't make you want to claw you face off in boredom. Conversations in *Mass Effect 2* aren't just a matter of passively absorbing what's being said, rather you can steer conversations depending on your own personality (or the personality you're giving your Shepard). You can keep things clam and professional, be an aggressive dick or sit somewhere in between. You'll need to be on the ball too because now and then a time-sensitive prompt will appear that'll allow you to interrupt a conversation with a sudden action. Like kicking somebody out a window. Argument: won.

It's got a bloody fantastic ending

Actually it's got a few of them, but the most favourable one is damn impressive. The action builds and builds until the game culminates in a breathless finale. It's so refreshing, particularly when so many games tend to fizz out at the end (or blow their best wads at the beginning to trick people into hanging around).



Test Drive Unlimited 2
TDU2 all about competition (racing, challenges), social (making friends in the game, joining clubs) and discovery (driving every road and even getting out of your car to find car wrecks). This looks both beautiful and unique.



Bodycount
Death, lots of death; that's *Bodycount* in a shotgun shell. We got hands-on with this recently and we love how it has a cover/leaning system that can be triggered anywhere in a level. We also dig its epic explosions.



DiRT 3
This is steering back to its rally roots and even contains a new racing mode, gymkhanam to keep the extreme folk happy. Veteran rallyists will play this for the 50 years of rallying lovingly represented within.



Beyond Good & Evil HD
Beyond Good & Evil is one of those cult-hit titles that everybody oohs and aahs over, but few have actually played it. That's a shame. Now that it's back in glorious HD, non-players no longer have an excuse.



El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron
God knows how it's pronounced, or what a 'Metatron' is, but man this is looking bloody amazing. The combat in this features is shaping up to be fascinating, deep and gorgeous.



inFAMOUS 2
Ignoring all his recent costume changing and facelifts, Cole is still set to electrify in this shockingly good-looking sequel. *Uncharted 2* may not be the prettiest belle at the ball for too much longer.

What will set Homefront apart from the shooter crowd?

We heard what you just said; “another first-person shooter, I’ll sit on the fence with this”. Well that’s the sort of blasé attitude that gets countries invaded. Here’s why you need to get prepared, civilian layabout.

This isn’t just one story, but the story of us all

THQ announced a tie-in novel that explores the early days of the occupation of the United States by the GKR, and it sets the stage for the game itself. The story focuses on the journey of a group of reporters making their way across America, and while not a specific focus of the narrative, the characters from the game are involved too. The novel is also written by John Milius and Raymond Benson and is due out before the game’s release. It’s part of what THQ is describing as a “vast transmedia strategy” for Homefront.

The emotionality of the world is eerily believable

We’ll admit it, the odds of this scenario actually happening are slim-to-none. But that feeling of disbelief gets the crap suspended out of it when, in an on-rails intro section, you watch what happens to the disobedient civilians in the US. Watching an innocent person’s brains slowly drip off a window in front of you is mildly disturbing. Being a very unwilling witness to half a family getting summarily executed, while the other half has to look on, is something else entirely. Make no mistake people, this game is not for the squeamish and you’re going to want to do your part in this war.



Because North Korea is best Korea

In order to ensure that America remains Korea’s bitch, the occupiers have set up propaganda everywhere in their lovely conquered land. But rather than break the spirit of the occupied, the posters stuccoed throughout the levels are unintentionally funny, thanks to liberal uses of English and the serious low-tech nature of the GKR’s Photoshop ‘skillz’. It’s quite a rare and endearing visual dynamic, as never before has something so deliberately ominous been this humorous.



The soundscape is bloody amazing

Thanks to their *Battlefield* heritage, Kaos Studios realises the importance of the aural experience. *Homefront* has some of the meatiest gun sound effects we’ve heard in quite a while and the incidental noises of the world have seen as much care too. From what we’ve heard so far, the voice acting is spot on (without any horrific *Just Cause 2* accents) and having a gunfight with a baby crying nearby really adds a sense of immediacy to the battle.



Operation Flashpoint: Red River

Not only is this badboy built around four-player co-op online, and set in a real-life country (instead of Kraplakistan), *Red River* is also about the reality of war. One shot, one compost heap.



MotorStorm Apocalypse

This sequel pits you against track-side troublemakers. These tools will fire at you from buildings, try to steal your cars and run you off the road. This is *racing* people, go back to your shanties.



Dragon Age II

Bioware are fixing the main issue that bugged us: a hero that had dialogue options, but no voice. They’re also completely overhauling the combat system to make it feel more real-time. Real-time = a good time, *right?*



Back to the Future: The Game

This will take place six months after the events of *Part III*, and will offer us an insight into how Marty’s regular life feels, along with a look into what Doc was like growing up. Please be rad.



Virtua Tennis 4

Picture this: a dynamic camera that zooms to first-person view, a Move-enabled racket poised to swing and the option to see the ball fly in at you through stereoscopic 3D. Sega could serve up awesomeness here.



Twisted Metal

It’s been way too long since we’ve had great vehicular combat. *Twisted Metal* is set to sate our road rage tendencies with its wicked, clown-filled game modes set across four-player split-screen and 16-player online.



Penned by one of the best

Who is *Homefront*'s writer? John Milius. Who's that guy? He's the legend who wrote 1984's *Red Dawn* (the original "America gets invaded by commies" epic). If that isn't cool enough for you; Milius is also famous for penning some of the best Dirty Harry one-liners delivered by Clint Eastwood, including "Go ahead, make my day" and the "Do I feel lucky?" monologue. Clearly this bodes well for the in-game narrative.

The juggernaut takes no crap off of nobody

Call of Duty has its RC car perk, *Homefront* puts you in control of a missile-spewing, fence-crushing drone that is called the Juggernaut (but you can call it 'sir'). Early on in our hands-on with the single-player campaign, we found ourselves overwhelmed by a legion of GKR troops. After being handed a simple remote control, we were then able to make the Juggernaut not only target and destroy APCs full of attackers, but also roll over a few of the slower, unarmoured ones. Squelch!



A sequel is all but assured

It seems as though THQ is investing heavily in the franchise already. In an interview with gaming website VG247, THQ's Danny Bilson stated that "I know what *Homefront 2* is. It's not a repeat of *Homefront*. It doesn't take place in the same place or anything like that." Bilson has previously stated that the *Homefront* franchise would likely feature stories in London and on the international stage. Tomorrow could be when the war begins?



Every multiplayer skirmish is ever-changing

The kick-arse multiplayer component of *Homefront* is focused on large-scale vehicle based combat reminiscent of *Kaos*' first title, *Frontlines: Fuel of War*. The defining innovation of these online brouhahas is the battle points system, which is an in-game economy that allows you to insta-purchase weapons, gear and vehicles. The earning of points occurs when you take objectives or kill other players, and while you play you're forced to choose between many small purchases versus larger big ticket items like helicopters and tanks. The battlefield itself evolves too, as winning a round will shift the firefight into a previously locked section of the map.

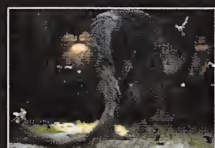


The familiar is made alien thanks to invasion

We all have an image of the American dream in our head; freshly mown grass, white picket fences and a flag pole in every yard rocking the stars and stripes. Forget all that. Now it's not uncommon to be running through a rabbit-warren of backyards only to find yourself gaping in awe at the dislocated landing gear of a crashed passenger jet. Likewise you may spot the familiar yellow school buses of the 'burbs, but now they're bedecked with razor wire and bullet holes. They're victim carriers now, and the only re-education the people inside will be getting is with an AK.

You're no longer a military super man

Too often in shooters we're an unstoppable hero who laughs in the face of the odds. *Homefront* tasks you with guerrilla tasks as you're very, very outnumbered. You'll really need to check that trigger-finger of yours, because not every battle can be won as easily as you think.



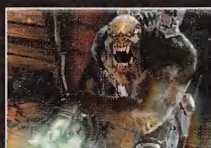
The Last Guardian

Think: *Ico* with a semi-tame *Colossus* and you won't be too far off. Your giant beast, Trico, can only be guided into solving puzzles by exploiting its animal instincts. Fumito Ueda says this is "open-ended, for you to figure out".



Street Fighter X Tekken

Not much has been revealed about this since the teaser where Ryu and Kazuya Mishima whaled on one another. But going off how great *Marvel vs. Capcom 3* is looking, this'll be mustard as.



Resistance 3

Saddle up as Joe Capelli, humanity's last hope for a mutant-free tomorrow. This sequel will have you capping Chimera throughout the remnants of post-apocalyptic US cities like New York City and St. Louis, Missouri.



Outland

Outland can best be described as a beautiful throwback to retro platformers like the original *Prince of Persia* or *Another World*. This 2D stunner also uses a "color-swap" mechanic like *Ikaruga*. Intriguing, no?



Fight Night Champion

This time around, EA are promising us a "grittier" and "darker" setting with animations and player damage that "truly conveys the brutality of the sport of boxing". You're looking at 60 plus boxers too. Booyah!



L.A. Noire

We've witnessed the facial animation technology of this game in action (which basically uses real-life actors). Honestly, we don't know if we can ever go back to traditional lip-synching again. Believe the hype.

How is Killzone 3 going to trump the last game?

You're deep behind enemy lines, trapped in some Helghast cross-fire and there's no chance of rescue or reinforcement. Is there any reason to continue fighting in this killzone? Damn straight, soldier!



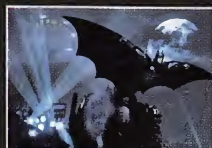
Jetpacks. Do you need further explanation?

Alright, fine – we'll detail these further. Though the exact feel for this new flight mode is still a work in progress, from what we've experienced it's headed in the right direction. With a jetpack you can now laugh in the face of stairs and, once airborne, using your bitchin' new rocket backpack is incredibly easy and almost feels like parachuting. You're got a turbo boost that gives you a nice push in the direction you'd like to go and can be used in short bursts a few times before gravity takes over again. When this pack is equipped you have access to a rockin' auto-cannon too, but you can change back to your regular guns on the ground, if you'd like.



This time it's up close and personal

Like the song says: reach out and touch someone. *Killzone 3* now includes an all new "Brutal" Melee System that allows you to unleash devastating finishing moves on that one Helghast who shot you one too many times. During our most recent demo of the game we were shown some of the hand-to-hand kills ISA soldiers will perform, such as ferocious and repeated stabs to the back, boot stomps to the neck and even a king-hit to the skull of a de-helmeted enemy (take that, safety-boy!).



Batman: Arkham City

This follow-up won't just be a lazy re-run at 'the same bat-time' on 'the same bat-channel'. Batman is going open-world and we'll be gliding about just like *Just Cause 2*. We don't just want this game; we *need* it.



Metal Gear Solid Rising

With *Rising* Kojima has accurately predicted what's going on in our pants right now. An action game where you dismember *everything* with a super-katana? Yes, please. Now, thanks.



The Lord of the Rings: War in the North

This has all the markings of an RPG epic. A narrative rich in Tolkien depth, Bioware-style digital acting, XP grindage and co-op. Also: cave trolls. You just *know* they'll have a cave troll.



Devil May Cry

No matter what side of the 'make-over' debate you stand on with *Dante 2.0*; the fact remains that the gameplay mechanics are being handled by the DMC veterans. Less moaning, more demon-owning.



Captain America: Super Soldier

Using a shield to assault people (in the face, from across the room) proves the saying "the best defence is a good offense". We're hoping that this movie tie-in game doesn't prove another cliché.



de Blob 2

Aussie games don't get much better than this. The original *de Blob* was a great game wasted on the Wii, but now it has an opportunity to truly shine. We've got especially high-hopes for this Move title.



It has the mother of all rocket launchers

Every shooter worth its shells needs to have its own rocket launcher, and in *Killzone 3*, the WASP is not so much a weapon as it is an act of divine punishment. The primary fire unleashes a swarm of up to nine (!) missiles that fly toward the target with respectable precision – even the shortest tap you can possibly do on R1 will unload three missiles. But in targeting mode, you'll fire a missile pod that goes up into the sky, comes down directly over the person you want to turn into chunky kibbles, and then bursts into a shower of explosives right on top of them. So awesome and we want one.



Rico has been toned down considerably

Love to watch him die (repeatedly), or just hate him; there's simply no denying that Sgt. Rico was mildly annoying. Rico is the irritating embodiment of the unruly jarhead jackass; foul-mouthed, unlikable and prone to stupid rages that put the rest of the team in serious jeopardy. We've had assurances that he'll be less outspoken this time around. Hopefully Guerrilla will kill the bastard off completely.

You'll feel like a small cog in a larger conflict

If the multiplayer beta is anything to go by, Guerrilla is aiming to make you feel like you're a part of a monumental struggle, not just a one-man skirmish. Even on some of the multiplayer maps we saw instances of AI dropships constantly flying in and out of the background, delivering loads of troops into a much bigger meat grinder. Similarly, when we were playing the objectives-based modes, whenever we successfully achieved our goal (rigging explosives to an enemy structure), that sucker would actually implode and topple over. Most other multiplayer games would 'reward' your efforts with a lacklustre 'boom' and some awe-retarding smoke effects.

The environments have escalated and diversified

First off, we've been shown a sneak-peek of the concept art from the game's 'less-wintery' environments, including an eerily blue 'alien jungle', a radium-soaked post-nuclear wasteland and several other angry-looking tourist destinations sprinkled with ominous towers and terrors. Second of all, we have it on good authority that the *Killzone 3* engine has been souped up and that the places you'll visit in it will be roughly 10 times huger than what passed for a level in *Killzone 2*.



Blasting stuff looks more believable

Let's talk destruction: it's why most of us signed onto this article, right? The destructible environments in *Killzone 3* – including boxes, bins, gates, and doorways – make the action more tactical because you can first blast away any cover spots and then kill off the sissies hiding behind them. We've also noticed that location-based damage – headshots, leg shots, nut shots – sported much more refined animations than what we remembered.

There's a much tighter multiplayer experience

The matchmaking system, which was built from scratch, no longer has you scrolling through server lists to find a game to join. There's also a new career system featuring five core classes, six weapons and six abilities per class. But most important of all, you can now choose how you want to upgrade your weapons and abilities with the skill points they earn during multiplayer, rather than being railroaded into unlocking crap you don't need.

Slay Helghast in glorious 3D

Honestly, the jury is still out on whether 3D will aid the gameplay or hinder it. Either way, it looks bloody amazing. Entering iron sights offers up an extremely realistic perception of depth and in the blizzard environments you half expect the flurries of snowflakes to land on your eyelashes. The concept of spotting targets on the edges of your peripherals takes a bit of a hit in 3D, but that's the trade-off that needs to happen when you need to experience that sensation of wanting duck every time an enemy bullet sizzles past your frontal lobe.

It's now Move enabled, for your pleasure

It works how you think it does: panning to the edge of the screen will turn your head, the stick on a Navigation controller will handle movement. Picking out targets is a whole lot quicker and to slap in another mag requires a visceral flick of your wrist. Interestingly, anybody wanting to use Move in multiplayer will find themselves in a separate matchmaking playlist to the folks using the traditional DualShock 3.



Spec Ops: The Line

When things get sandy, it's time to get handy. Destructible structures holding back tonnes of sand are just one of the unique ways to eliminate your enemies in this promising shooter. One to watch.



Journey

If you like trippy, you'll fall for this in a heartbeat. According to its creators this will "focus on making you tiny and weak again, removing the powers acquired in your modern-day life". Interpretation: this game may steal your TV remote.



Deus Ex: Human Revolution

Every time we see this our goofy grin gets a little wider (and goofier). Multiple approaches to a mission is what will set this apart from the crowd. You'll replay this game thrice. Yes, thrice.



Max Payne 3

Mum's the word on Max, and the suspense is killing us. If we had to speculate; we'd say the favellas of São Paulo will offer a certain verticality. Also, Max will regain health by applying sunblock to his cueball. Maybe.



Alice Returns

Set 11 years after the original tale, Alice has escaped from a lunatic asylum and is now haunted by the death of her parents. Seeking respite, she returns to Wonderland, but her mental state warps the world. Edgy, imaginative stuff.



F.E.A.R. 3

Like Forrest Gump said, "it's tough being brothers". Especially when one bro shoots the other bro in the head, but the victim returns as a spectral co-op buddy. Couple that dynamic with decent scares and this'll rock.

NEED FOR SPEED HOT PURSUIT



Reader Road Test

Hot Pursuit harks back to a time when the *Need For Speed* series was purely about point-to-point races through lush environments, thrashing gorgeous motors with price tags the length of your arm. And now cops are back, battling with racers on the beautiful roads of Seacrest County. But don't just take our word for it.

We invited four readers to come in to the OPS office, sit down for an entire day and play it. Then they told us what they really thought.



Brad Wall, SA

This is a flashback to the glory days of *Need For Speed* when it was cops versus racers and that was it. With the HD graphics it brings back good memories.

My favourite car was the Bugatti Veyron. It's just nuts! The way it sounds, the speed it reaches and the wing that pops up on the back to keep the car on the road was really cool, and it just set it apart from all the others we tried. I love cars, so going at breakneck speeds in the game is awesome.

Plus, when you evade a close call like a car coming at you head on or escaping a crash gets your

heart pumping. And the sound effects really bring the experience together. The most addictive part is the Autolog, hands down. Seeing your mate's name above your is just like, 'awww man you want to just get back in there and take it off him'. Can't wait to see the online modes of cops and racers. It's going to be sweet!

Loved being:

A racer in a Hot Pursuit event. Being chased isn't the smartest thing to do in real life, so *Need For Speed's* a great place to do it instead!



"The most addictive part is the Autolog, hands down. Seeing your mate's name above yours is just like, 'awww man you want to just get back in there and take it off him'."



Oliver Josephs, SA

"This is the best *Need For Speed* that's been out for ages. It's really recaptured what it was back in the day for me."

This is the best *Need For Speed* that's been out for ages. It's really recaptured what it was back in the day for me. Loads of fun and really competitive, which is exactly what it should be.

The speed of the cars seems to represent itself really well, so you're totally immersed in it. The sound effects is what gets me, I most like the sound of the car hitting the nitrous, and the sound of the car going from water to dry to dirt. You can hear a big difference and that's an important thing for me.

What makes it addictive is the online Speedwall, and seeing your mates that have beaten your time. I just have to get on, and everything else goes to the wayside until I do! There's always something unlocking after each race, like a new car or better weapons. I don't know how long it will take to actually clock the game and finish it.

Little things make a big difference. Loved how the cop lights light up a tunnel, and at night time your headlights really flicker and light up the road ahead. Addicted? Just about.

Loved being:

A racer in single player, but I'm really looking forward to cop co-op online!





Zac Connolly, NSW

This is probably the best of this genre that I've played. I could pick it up and start to really get control of it; it's a lot more user friendly than other racing games that I usually play. I can just tell that getting better on the tracks would come with getting your bonus from drift and slipstream, and knowing when to use your nitro boost.

You can apply a lot of strategy to get the best lap time. When you hit a certain corner on a track and see that your time isn't better than the last effort, it's time to restart!

It's a cool game to just watch when you aren't playing it, so that makes it a good group game. Online racing should be cool, but I reckon the best value is playing with a group of like-minded mates and trying to beat each other's time, and seeing how they did it.

The landscapes look really, really good, and going from snow, to forest to desert keeps things interesting.

Loved being:

A cop. There's similar challenges to being a racer, but with an extra layer of knocking the bad guys off.

"It's a cool game to just watch when you aren't playing it, so that makes it a good group game."



"Depending on your driving style the AI adapts to what you do which is pretty cool."

Casey Brown, NSW

This is great. I used to play the original *Hot Pursuit* and loved sitting around with mates with that on PlayStation. This game's going back to more action which is cool.

There's plenty of variety and good progression. The opportunity to choose what you want when you want is good, and even being restricted to some events with only, say, a Porsche freshens it up. You're being forced to use cars you probably wouldn't normally, and that's a key idea.

Favourite car would have to be the Shelby Super Snake. It's really raw and I'm a fan of just ploughing into other racers. I'm hanging out to unlock the Audi

R8 at home!

Loved the randomness of each level. Even going over the same race four times was completely different. There's randomly spawning traffic, also the AI behaves differently depending on what you're doing. If you keep driving in front of them they'll keep using EMP's and you have to use spike belts, and vice versa. Depending on your driving style the AI adapts to what you do which is pretty cool.

Loved being:

A cop. Having a helicopter on your side is excellent, and it's thrilling when you have to bust eight racers.



WELCOME TO PAIN

Mortal Kombat's back. And it's looking even more brutal and controversial than before. Series creator Ed Boon and director of art Steve Beran tell us why you should bet on MK

It's always the quiet ones that you should be wary of. We're at Netherrealm studios in Chicago, Illinois, in an unassuming part of town. Inside, co-creator Ed Boon and Director of Art Steve Beran are showing us around the new studios. We can practically smell the fresh paint.

Both Boon and Beran are gaming veterans. Beran joined the team in time for *Mortal Kombat 3* in the mid-'90s and Boon, along with John Tobias, created the *Mortal Kombat* series in the early '90s. The first game hit arcades around the world in 1992. It became infamous, and was the

catalyst for the ESRB – the US's version of the OFLC. While that country's classification system isn't government run, it's not every decade that your videogame is the reason a national committee's formed to decide what's suitable for people to watch and play.

Boon and Beran are equally unassuming. Inside the demonstration theatre, Boon's calmly explaining some of the new features of *Mortal Kombat*, while onscreen Jax – the muscle bound cop with metal arms – and Nightwolf – the face paint-clad native American-inspired character –

are viciously having a go at each other.

Compared to 2008's crossover with the DC Universe, this is beyond brutal. It's devastating. As the match carries on, strips of flesh have fallen off both fighters and they're coated in blood. Despite the gore – and there is literally loads of it – this is more comical than disturbing.

"It's easily the best game we've ever done," says Beran later. "That does sound cocky, but I'm really, really happy with everything about it. I think – well, I know – we're listening to the fans and giving them exactly what they want."



That's such a scorpion thing to do



"Let me plug that wound with my knife"

Get over here

Their quiet nature is surprising, but it really lets the game speak for itself. It's back to basics for the series, with a couple of twists. The 3D models remain but the fighting's all done on a 2D plane. The weapons system used in previous *MK* games has been trashed, and any weapons are character specific. Nightwolf uses a tomahawk and a bow and arrow for melee and ranged attacks respectively, but the axe is used for finishing off a combo.

Think back to the mid '90s and in particular *MK3*. It used this implementation of combos with weapons to make the game feel instantly recognisable but also new. This new *MK* is the *Super Street Fighter IV* of *Mortal Kombat*, grounded in the best bits of the past but added to, refined and worked on until it feels almost drum-skin tight.

Artwork and character models are revisions of the past glorious HD. As we trek around the studio and pass bays of computers and dev kits, there are sheets and sheets of artwork on the walls, from concept backgrounds to designs for each character's costume. Beran tells us that they'd normally go through about 10 designs before reaching a conclusion. However, since they're taking classic costumes for this *Mortal Kombat* the deviations are minimal.

"It's good getting back into the heart of *MK* and [doing] what the fans really love. If you pair up the concept art to the actual screens, they're alike, lighting-wise, effect-wise.

"Now that we don't have to worry about complete 3D environments we can set the stage to be this really nice piece of art we can polish and polish. It's always a challenge to reinvent or update backgrounds that people know and still stay true to that flavour.

"I can't say enough about our studio. We went through a lot of rough times with Midway," says Beran, hesitantly. "Now that we're at

NetherRealm we have outstanding artists, programmers and it's really giving everybody a chance to shine in this game. I'm really, really proud of this game.

"I think we're really bringing a lot more personality to each character than we have in previous games. Everybody's moves are tweaked and nothing [can be thought of as] filler. Every animation is polished, and that's easily the thing I'm most proud of.

"Even the backgrounds – I keep going back to the backgrounds – but we're trying to focus on bringing more technical advances to [this area]. If you see the Temple there's stained glass windows, and you walk through the beams of light. There are lots of characters in the background of stages, animating and a lot of little things that add up to a lot. I think players will find stuff that's not going to knock [them] over the head but it has a lot of cool effects that'll add up. When players play they're going to be like 'did you see that!? Did you see that!?' [We want] to get people talking."

The game is firmly embedded in its roots, specifically *MK*, *MK2* and *MK3*, and the 2D aspect is what makes Ed Boon the most excited. It's true that you don't know how good something until you don't have it anymore. However, since *Mortal Kombat* relies so much on its history, it's plausible that there will be gamers that have never played a *Mortal Kombat*, or any of the first three parts. What's their reference point? What can they expect a *Mortal Kombat* game to be?

"To me there's like four to five elements to it," explains Boon. "It's accessible; I think anybody can pick up the controller play the game and get it. We don't have really super complicated things that only a hardcore game guy can play. ▶

"This new *MK* is the **Super Street Fighter IV** of *Mortal Kombat*, grounded in the best bits of the past"

SEKRETS

The pool of acid. Those spikes above and under the bridge. Strange silhouettes against the full moon. The "Toasty!" guy. Babalities and Animalities. Surely these signature icons are going to make it into next year's *MK*. Aren't they? Ed Boon tells all.

"You know in the past whenever we have added a babality or a friendship or an animality or something that's like a bit of a joke," says Boon. "We would tell people about it and they would go 'Oh well I want to see every babality' and this time around we really wanted to make the goal of if we were to do a friendship in the game or a babality in the game, we would never talk about it. We are always going to let people discover it if it's in there. So if it's in the game I probably wouldn't mention it to you right now."

"*MK* is known for having secrets and there are a ridiculous amount of secrets," smiles Beran. "It's

going to be funny to see how long it takes people to find them. Fans are usually always really devoted and try to find everything, like fast. Generally they find things quite fast but there's some really, really obscure ones in here too but they're very, very cool.

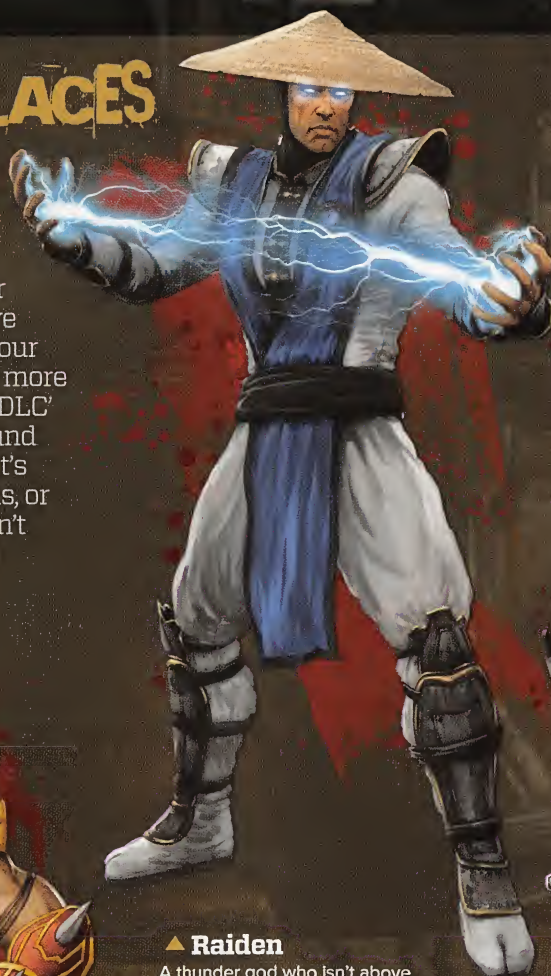
"It's safe to say you'll see backgrounds incorporated into the fight. I wish I could go into more of it but it wouldn't be *Mortal Kombat* if we didn't have that. They're very, very cool. They're updates of...it's obvious. Sorry. I want to talk about it. It's something we're totally excited about, but I can't talk about it."

▲ Scorpion

He's not the type of guy to politely ask you to move a bit closer to him. Not at all.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

So far, there are nine confirmed backgrounds and a dozen characters. There are some characters missing from the roster that were in the trailer (Raiden) and some that just have to be in there (Liu Kang). Below our dozen pugilists was room for 14 more Kombatants, and a mysterious 'DLC' box. Plus, as we were guided round the studio we spied a list of what's either a wish-list of backgrounds, or stuff that's coming out that wasn't announced. Goro's Lair is one of those that caught our eye.



▲ Raiden

A thunder god who isn't above a cameo in *Big Trouble in Little China*. We respect that.



▲ Sektor

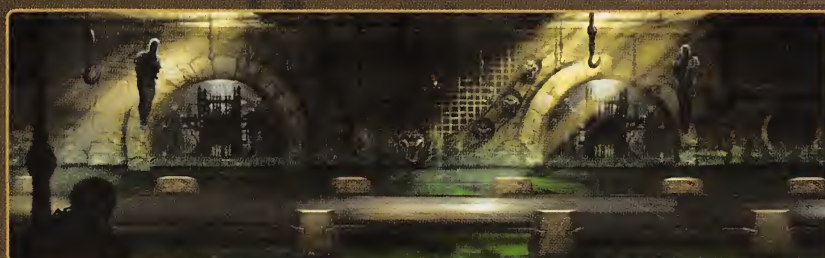
The ultimate childhood fantasy of ninja and robot. He's also rocking mad dreads.



▲ Shao Kahn

He's a bad, bad man and he wants you to be his soul brother. Like, forever.

Characters so far: Scorpion, Mileena, Reptile, Sub Zero, Kung Lao, Johnny Cage, Nightwolf, Sektor, Sonya Blade, Cyrax, Kitana, Jax



▲ The Dead Pool

It's entertaining [and] we have ridiculous levels of violence with no hesitation of doing something silly or something funny in the game. As long as it gets a laugh or a reaction out of people, we have no qualms about that. I think that's part of what people call the kind of campy factor of the game; it's not taking itself too seriously.

"Then secrets, stuff like 'there is a hidden character here' and the rumours that happen. With this one we are also going for the deeper fighting mechanic."

"[We've been] looking back at the previous games and finding out what really works and what doesn't work," says Beran, "And really focusing on that and turning it up. Usually we save fatalities towards the end of the game. We did fatalities right away in this game and just polished the hell out of them. It's working out really, really well."

Krispy world kreation

After talking to both Boon and Beran it's clear that they're having fun making this. "This sounds cheesy," says Beran, "but it's hard not to get tired of it."

"One day you're working on a Special Forces military background and the next day you're working on some freaky surreal outworld background...it's always pretty trippy. It's not like you're working on a sports game where you say 'oh today I have to make a helmet'. And Ed gives us a lot of freedom, we can pretty much design what we want and love the concept work we have."

So where do you go for your inspiration after all these *Mortal Kombat* games?

"The biggest inspiration to me is *Star Wars* in terms of design. Even back in the early days, John Tobias is probably an even bigger *Star Wars* dork than I am. I think a lot of *MK* is kind of *Star Wars*-ish to a degree. Like Shao Kahn has a kind of Darth Vader flavour to him, and Liu Kang is kind of like the hero like Luke. There's like a lot similarities you can dig into if you're really look at it."

So would you like to do a *Mortal Kombat* vs *Star Wars* fighting game?

"I would kill someone to do that. I would love to do that. It would be great to see a really good *Star Wars* fight game."

As for Boon, "I have wanted to do *MK* vs. *Street Fighter* for over 10 years. That would be a



▲ The Pit



▲ Sub Zero

Ice cold, no mistakes, that's Sub Zero. When he dies his enemies call him 'plain zero'.

▲ Sonya Blade

Her combat vest is ludicrously small and they sprayed her pants on. Interesting tactics.

Backgrounds: Bell Tower, The Dead Pool, Desert, Khan's Koliseum, The Living Forest, The Pit, Shang Tsung's Throne Room, Bradley Station, The Temple



▲ Desert

fun game just because *MK* and *Street fighter* have such a [rivalry]. In the '90s there was such a rivalry there, so this versus would hit on a lot of peoples' nerves. I think that's what you need to do, to make something that has a big impact like that."

It's remarkable enthusiasm coming from a duo that have worked nearly single-mindedly on one series for 15-20 years.

"With each iteration we are faced with the challenge of answering the question with the player, 'why would you care about THIS *Mortal Kombat*,'" said Boon. "From our perspective we have never been afraid of adding something dramatic or different or wiping the slate clean or rebooting the game, we have rebooted *MK* like [counts it out] one, two, three times already so I think we really offer a different experience. When you played *MK1* it plays nothing like *MK* vs *DC* universe and *MK Deception* plays nothing like *MK2*."

"Ironically one of my favourite new things is something that's old and that's the 2D gameplay. I think a lot of people want to see a classic return to the *MK* 2D fighting that they remember from the '90s. It's a novel thing because we haven't done it for so long.

"3D games have become so complex, and it's alienated some fighting gamers. This is a big step in terms of bringing back some people that were intimidated by the 3D fighting games. [I'm happy that we've] come back to the mature presentation – it's so ridiculous how much blood is over the characters. It's not even something that people look at and are shocked by. They see the fatalities that are so over the top that people laugh at it. They get the joke; that to me is what's great about it too."

How does it make you feel

It is over the top, and it's impossible to finish a fight without looking like you've taken a shower in red paint. Each surface is cosmetically altered, usually by the streams of goop flying off your character or being broken up into pieces – hard landings or Jax's ground pound coughs up chunks of rock and leaves a dent near your feet.

One of the hooks for new (old) *MK* is a three stage 'super meter', built up by taking damage and inflicting it. The first step is called the 'breaker', the second allows for a more powerful attack. Nightwolf, for example, fires three arrows ▶

WHAT TO PLAY WHEN YOU'RE NOT PLAYING

We always like to know what developers are playing when they're not molding their own games. Both Boon and Beran love spending their downtime with Sony's own Kratos.

"I wish I had 20 hours to spare to go through a game," laments Boon. "But I have definitely played *God of War*, I think that's a great series. Unfortunately I never played a *GTA* game for any extended period of time because my idea is that there's 100 hours you have to devote this and I know there's a zero per cent chance that I will ever do it, so it completely discourages me from even starting down the path. I acknowledge its genius game formula and Rockstar are obviously very successful with what they are doing, but I've never actually gone through the whole experience of finishing one of the games.

"I'm a big fan of *God of War*," Enthused Beran. "I played all three religiously. Still, I need more time. Been working way too much. But *God of War* is what I really make time to play."



FROM THE OPS FACEBOOK PAGE

"They were cool fatality ideas!" said Ed Boon. What were? These were. We asked you to give us your Fatality ideas on the OPS Facebook page (facebook.com/OPSAustralia). We put five of the best to Mr Boon. Here's what he thought.

▶ Stabbed by a midget (Codey Searse)

(we get a funny look) Stabbed by a midget? (pause) How would you make that a fatality, would you turn into a midget and then you stab them?

▶ Sub Zero makes an icicle on the roof and upper cuts his opponent into it. Then they slide off onto one he made on the floor (Joel Phillips)
(laughs) That's genius.

▶ A time paradox fatality: the character goes back in time and kills their opponent when they were a baby, or before the match started. (Al Peck)

Oh, now that's definitely genius I wish I thought of that one, oh man ... kill them as a baby oh my god that's genius... well we might do that one.

▶ Take a (big) knife, cut the arena in half, put the opponent in the gap between the two sides, then push them back together, slowly crushing him and finally watching his head explode (Saed Batshon)
Oh my god (subdued). That's not bad.

▶ A character puts their entire arm down the enemy's throat and pulls out their digestive track from the inside! (Jermaine Oduro) [note: we altered this a bit and added 'then strangles him with it']

That's sounds like something that has come up in our Fatality meeting and that's one of the ones I usually veto because that's too far! That's just crossing the line.

LOCATION LOCATION

Tucked away just outside the city of Chicago, the only hint you're stepping into Netherrealm's brand new studio is the massive Shao Khan chair sitting in the lobby.

Out the back, a warehouse-sized motion-capture studio allows the team to record the fight moves you'll see in the game. Most of it is mo-cap with some key-frame animation combined in. Elsewhere, the team haven't been shy in making their mark on the place. Dividing meeting rooms and offices from the development studios is, well, a shrine to all things *Mortal Kombat*. It's a collector's wet dream.

"We wanted to have a central hub to the building that was a museum/gallery," says Beran, pointing to a wall-mounted screen that shows still images of the game. "We always have this screen running that shows work in progress. Everyone can see what's in development at that time."

"You'd be surprised that when you have upwards of a 100 people working on a game how easy it is for any one individual to not really get a good overview of the whole game when they're working on small things," says Boon. "This way, everyone can keep up with the new, cool stuff."

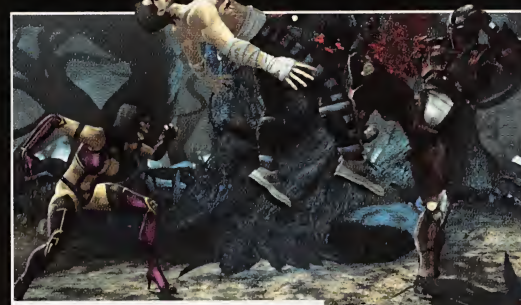
"It's just a cool place to meet in the mornings," finishes Beran.

They even have their own arcade with the team's greatest hits and fondest memories running on cabinets. *MK*, *MK2*, *Ultimate MK3*, *The Grid* – a four-player sports game – and a table-top arcade game. All free to play, all running at the same time, all shrouded in the comfortable gloom of darkness. Just minus the surly clerk on the counter.

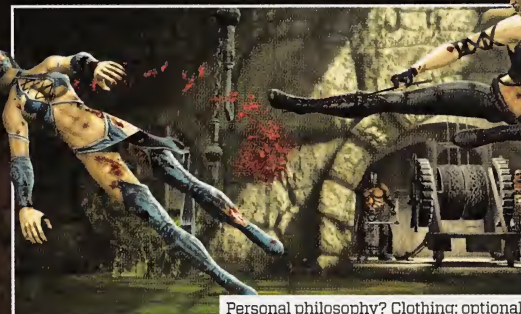
Lobby



Steve Beran
NetherRealm's Art Director. He's responsible for these wicked backgrounds.



Not having the best day, are we Johnny?



Personal philosophy? Clothing: optional



Watch for the spin-off, Johnny: Uncaged

from his bow rather than just one.

The third stage, though, is far more visceral. Land a stage three attack and the camera zooms in as the music cuts out to a shimmering reverberation. Everything turns to black and white with a slight highlight around your opponent's veins. It's the X-ray move, and as you land a collection of blows you can see the bones and bits of your unfortunate rival breaking. Skull's fracture, bones in forearms shatter, the health bar goes down by a massive percentage.

Sound effects are engaging, and when metal implements are being tossed around it sounds like a knife plunging into a mass of meat and bone and twisting around.

Fatalities are, well, disturbing but with a macabre sense of humour, and each character has at least two. Johnny Cage launches an opponent's cranium in the air, lets it bounce on the ground, catches it and then proudly shows it off to the camera. Cyrax unleashes a Baghdad-load of rockets that blasts extremities. What's left looks like something that'd hang in a butcher's window. These descriptions make this sound like a game our classification board will have a fit classifying.

But it's also time of bubblegum gaming, when *MK* was the hottest fighter out there, causing a tonne of playground arguments. It's a game of showmanship with a punishing finale. You want street cred? Figure out how to pull off a stage fatality.

Battles aren't limited to one-on-one, as *MK* includes a two-on-two tag-team mode. Self explanatory, it plays like a regular match but with the ability to swap your characters in and out. We didn't see any health bars regenerating, but with a few more months of development time between now and its release, this might change.

The biggest leap from *MK2* to *MK3* was the introduction of the run button so characters could cover the gap between themselves and opponents with a mad dash. There's a lot more acreage to cover now with wide-screen TVs,

The Gallery

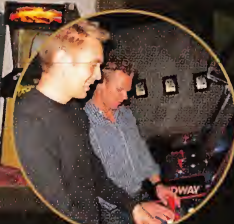


Ed Boon
Series creator and Pete Sampras lookalike. All he's missing is a racquet.



Goro
Simultaneously ugly and fascinating, you can bet he'll be in the new *MK*.

The arcade

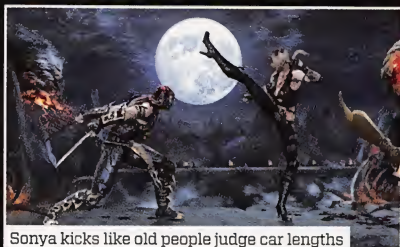


Sektor mask
This is one of three masks used in mo-cap in *MK3*, next to Kabal and Shao Kahn.



Bible
An actual Bible used as a prop for one of the PS2 games. We were scared to touch it.

MK Kabinets
Used every day by NetherRealm staff, we were smitten. Bet you wish you worked here.



Sonya kicks like old people judge car lengths

and after launching a few ice bolts as Sub Zero, and throwing Cyrax's net out we were scrabbling for the run button to make the fight more 'intimate'. It was oddly absent.

"We have had a number of people ask us about that," said Boon. "There are two camps of the 2D guys. I think there are probably more people who like *MK2* than *MK3*. I actually like *Ultimate MK3*. I cannot play *MK2* anymore my thumb does this —" Boon taps the table — and when it's not there I get frustrated.

"So from that standpoint I would miss it too but I don't think this game plays as much like *MK3* as much as it's a *MK2* kind of thing. Maybe in the future we'll put it in but probably not for this game."

Take a stand

Each character can dash in with a double tap, but at the time we played it, characters that had teleportation moves, or something that could trap and yank their opponent closer lead to faster or bigger hits, and less of a hiatus between attacks. Scorpion's 'get over here' reverberated around the demo pen, and Sektor's teleporting punch rattled out a few times.

We also found we could alter our characters stance, either left or right foot facing forwards, but were far too busy guffawing and wincing at the action on screen to note how it altered things. We suspect it ties into the control scheme, as you now have front punch and back punch, and the same for kicks — the old high/low combo's been given the same treatment as the run button.

It didn't impede us from getting caught up in some vicious to-and-fro, and we felt comfortable with the way it handled. Everything felt familiar, but very fresh, and were only semi-successful pulling off the beastly X-ray attack in the two hours we were playing *MK* at Netherrealm.



Sonya: we guarantee you'll be sensitive to her 'kneeds'

Despite there being only a handful of characters in the build we played, we were absorbed. The fun and joy that Boon and his team had in creating the latest iteration shone through, and while many people are passionate, these two and their team are dedicated. Many games and movies are riding high on a wave of

nostalgia, but there's a spark in NetherRealm's production that gives it more appeal than just being a glossy update. Old fans will be surprised how vibrant the brawler can be, while newcomers have a fine entry into one of the most notorious and aggressive fighters in the last 20 years of gaming. Come get some. 🎮

WHAT'S NEXT?

From a team of four on 92's *Mortal Kombat* to a 100 on this game, there's room for 160 all up in the new digs. "We built the studio getting ready to expand to do more than one game," says Boon. "We're in the process of hiring people." Oh. To do what?

"I have had an idea for a while for like this kind of horror movie, survivor horror type of game and I think that's a great genre that could be, there is still a lot of life left and action adventure games I'm a big fan of *GOW* like I said, a game of that nature could exist even in the *MK* universe, so I would be a big fan of that. I certainly don't really want to go into a genre that is so particular and specific like a *Call of Duty* game. Anybody who is gonna make a game that is going to compete against *Call of Duty* you really need to be prepared to lose (laughs) because they have so many years of experience of balancing and perfecting it. Also just people's association with it. I mean one of the things with *MK* is that there are not a lot of fighting games that sell well. There's *MK* there's *Street Fighter* there's *Tekken* and after that there is not many that sell big numbers and I think that it's difficult to get into a genre that has really established multi-year titles that are still doing well, so the *Call of Duty* things I don't think that I... I mean it would be fun to work on but there's no way I'm arrogant enough to think that I can jump in and beat them at that."



The OPS

CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE

If you're sitting in the comfy chair waiting for the jolly fat man in red to surprise you with Christmas cheer and amazing swag, stay seated. You're in the best possible place, and OPS is here with a wrap up of the hottest entertainment options available this holiday season.



▲ SONOS S5

\$699, sonos.com.au

After the local school's choir's been on TV you're right to want something with a bit more punch from your collection. Enter the Sonos with the aural oomph and flexibility to make that happen. This wireless music system can be controlled via your iPhone or iPad from any room in the house. Set up a couple of units around the house and you'll never be far from your favourite tunes.

Samsung Galaxy Tab ▶

Available on Optus plan, samsung.com.au

Tablets are some of the hottest new tech trends, perfect for browsing the web over 3G or WiFi, reading e-books, making calls and sending SMS. Or you can even watch a movie on it, and the Adobe Flash Player support is great for Youtube. So, while you're digesting just a bit more desert, this ultra portable device with its 7" screen will be the perfect companion for checking out the OPS Facebook page and seeing what everyone else is playing over the festive season.



◀ The Girl Who Leapt Through Time

\$39.95, madman.com.au

A Japanese schoolgirl, Makoto, discovers she can travel backwards in time for her own benefit. It gives her the perfect opportunity to retake tests, smash karaoke and — more importantly — discover that a friend has a crush on her. She quickly realises her powers have to be used for more than just having a good time. However, having a good time is what you'll do when watching this. Perfect for everyone, this is glorious escapism and a fun adventure.



Let The Right One In ▶

\$119.95, villageroadshow.com.au

Recently re-made in English as Let Me In, this Swedish vampire film will snare even the harshest cynic that's been bombarded by the groan-worthy Twilight series. Oskar's a lonely 12-year-boy who lives with mother who works night shift. Oskar befriends Eli, a young girl, who has moved next door — and discovers she's a vampire. So, yes, it's a horror film but it's more so about friendship and love. Ergo, perfect Christmas movie to watch with mates.



▼ Family Guy: It's A Trap!

\$54.95, jbhifionline.com.au

You might want to tell Grandma to block her ears for this one. This third instalment in the Family Guy spoofs of Star Wars lands with the usual biting wit. Following Blue Harvest and Something, Something, Something Dark Side, It's A Trap lampoons Episode VI of George Lucas' original trilogy with cameos by Patrick Stewart, Michael Dorn, Adam West and Carrie Fisher. Freakin' sweet. The box set comes with a t-shirt and collector's cards too.





◀ Top Gear: The Challenges 1 - 4 Collection

\$119.95, villageroadshow.com.au

Universally appealing, the talented and pleasantly deprecating *Top Gear* lads accept all manner of unusual automotive challenges. Examples? They turn a car into a boat, pit a jet fighter against a Bugatti Veyron in an unconventional race, take three rear-wheel drive cars for some ice racing, and much, much more. And, it's all packaged inside a very tame racing driver bust.



▲ Dual Shock

\$99.95, sony.com.au

Iconic. Reliable. Essential. The Dual Shock is the bedrock of your gaming experience, and while the black one that came standard with your PS3 blends in with the décor, you need something that going to set you and the rest of the family apart – especially if you're all playing *FIFA11* to decide just who's washing up after lunch. Available in black, red and blue these are an excellent stocking stuffer.

◀ The Pacific

\$99.95, warnerbros.com.au

Great for nibbling on from the 27th to the first week of the New Year is this 10-part miniseries from HBO. *The Pacific* focuses on the real-life journey of three US Marines during the whole of WWII, from their initial battle with the Japanese on Guadalcanal, to the nightmare of Okinawa and then returning home after V-J Day. It's an epic journey, and a quality Blu-ray to add to your collection.



▲ Sony VPLHW20

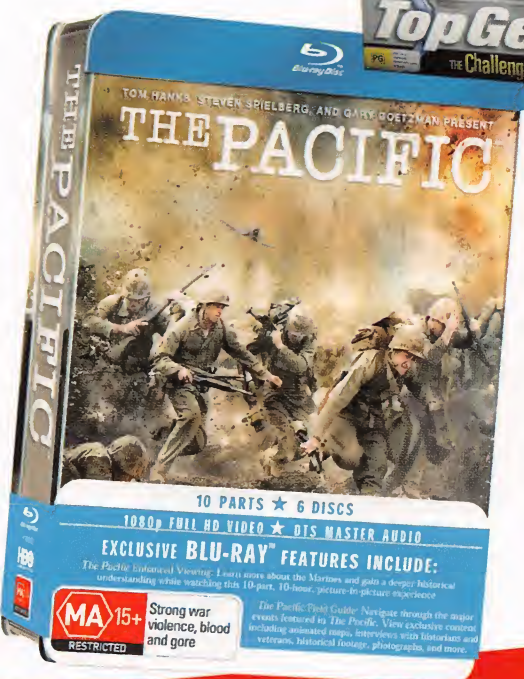
\$4299, sony.com.au

Okay, so you'd have to be extra good this year to warrant this. Utilising the same tech that goes into their 3D BRAVIA TVs, this 3D-capable projector is the ultimate solution for how to watch movies and play games. When you're craving something bigger fill your eyeballs than a piffling 60 inch LCD, set this to display a massive 300 inches of screen estate. With a dynamic range of 150,000:1 you'll also get the blackest blacks and vivid colour. The only question you need to answer is: how big's your house?

◀ National Geographic: Great Migrations

\$54.95, madman.com.au

Surprise your family – and yourself – with this stunningly shot documentary series that chronicles the migration of wildebeests, zebras, elephants, sharks and more in a seven-hour HD presentation. The crews covered over 670,000 kilometres on every continent of the Earth to discover just what it takes for an entire herd/flock/menagerie to uproot. And you thought moving furniture around the house was hard.



▲ Animal Kingdom

\$44.95, madman.com.au

One of the best films out in 2010, *Animal Kingdom* is an Aussie crime drama that focuses on teenager Joshua 'J' Cody and his descent into his warped family. After his mother dies, Josh is taken in by uncles and too-caring grandmother Janine. J's uncles earn a crust in Melbourne by doing armed robbery, drug dealing and by generally dodging the law. However, a Senior Sergeant might have what it takes to pull Josh from the murky depths and teach him a real lesson about justice. One to watch in the lull after Boxing Day.



Samsung ST100 Camera ▶

\$449, Samsung.com.au

So, Auntie Julie's over and wants a photo with you, her favourite niece/nephew. Problem: no one else is around to take the happy snap. Solution: the ST100. With a 1.8" touch screen on the front you can line up the best shot with family and friends without needing anyone else to take the shot. It's good for more than just appeasing demanding aunts, shooting 720p HD video with the capacity for massive 14.2 megapixel stills and 5x optical zoom.



BIGGEST PRIZE

48 games and a PSP! 1 winner!

Thanks to our local gaming partners we're doing what we did at the end of last year, and giving away one enormous, year-defining Christmas present.

It's this: a shelf-straining 48 games and a PSP, and one lucky reader is going to win the lot. Santa would have a heart attack shoving this in your stocking.

But you have to earn it.

To win our best prize ever, ever, you have to answer the following question – truthfully, too – and follow the entry instructions below.

QUESTION: What good deed have YOU done this year to make you deserve this enormous prize?

Good luck, and Merry Christmas from *OPS!*



Assassin's Creed Brotherhood
Publisher: Ubisoft



Blazblue Calamity Trigger
Publisher: AIE



Jame Bond 007: Blood Stone
Publisher: Activision



Fallout: New Vegas
Publisher: Bethesda



FIFA 11
Publisher: EA Sports



Final Fantasy XIII
Publisher: Ubisoft



Lego Harry Potter
Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment



Mafia II
Publisher: 2K Games



Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom
Publisher: Namco Bandai Partners



Medal Of Honor
Publisher: EA



Modnation Racers
Publisher: SCE



Monopoly Streets
Publisher: EA



Prince of Persia Trilogy
Publisher: Ubisoft



Prison Break
Publisher: QV Software



Pure Football
Publisher: Ubisoft



R.U.S.E.
Publisher: Ubisoft



SAW II
Publisher: Mindscape



Shaun White Skateboarding
Publisher: Ubisoft



Singularity
Publisher: Activision



Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions
Publisher: Activision



Splatterhouse
Publisher: Namco Bandai Partners



Sports Champions
Publisher: SCE



Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II
Publisher: Activision



Tom Clancy's HAWX 2
Publisher: Ubisoft

EVER!

Don't miss it!



WIN!
\$4,000+
WORTH OF
PLAYSTATION
GEAR!



Blur
Publisher: Activision



Borderlands
Publisher: 2K Games



Call of Duty: Black Ops
Publisher: Activision



**Castlevania:
Lords of Shadow**
Publisher: Mindscape



Dragon Ball Raging Blast 2
Publisher: Namco Bandai Partners



Enslaved
Publisher: Namco Bandai Partners



Front Mission Evolved
Publisher: Ubisoft



God of War Collection
Publisher: SCE



Heavy Rain
Publisher: SCE



Guitar Hero Van Halen
Publisher: Activision



**Harry Potter and the
Deathly Hallows part 1**
Publisher: EA



**International
Cricket 2010**
Publisher: Namco Bandai Partners



**Naruto Ultimate
Ninja Storm 2**
Publisher: Namco Bandai Partners



Naughty Bear
Publisher: AIE



PES 2011
Publisher: Mindscape



**Guitar Hero
Warriors of Rock Bundle**
Publisher: Activision



DJ Hero 2 Bundle
Publisher: Activision



The Sims 3
Publisher: EA



SingStar Dance
Publisher: SCE



SingStar Guitar
Publisher: SCE



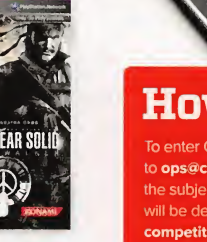
Vanquish
Publisher: Sega



WRC
Publisher: AFA



**God of War
Ghost of Sparta**
Publisher: SCE



**Metal Gear Solid:
Peace Walker**
Publisher: Mindscape



How to Enter

To enter Official PlayStation Magazine competitions email your entries to ops@citrusmedia.com.au with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to **OPS competitions PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW, 2002**. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. **Competitions close 11/1/2011**. Winners will be notified by mail.



PlayStation
Network

FREE* to join
to play

START UP A FILM FESTIVAL ON PS3



CULT CLASSICS

CINEMATIC MASTERPIECES

RARE GEMS



As well as the latest HD games, PlayStation®3 lets you enjoy movies streamed on-demand.

Discover an amazing world of independent, foreign and classic films, with MUBI. Movies are available to rent in either Pay-per-view (\$1.75 for short films and \$6.25 for feature films) or with a 30 day subscription pass, you can enjoy as many films as you like for \$19.95.

Register for the free* to access PlayStation®Network and download MUBI from PlayStation®Store.

au.playstation.com/mubi

THE GAME IS JUST THE START...



PS3

PlayStation 3

SONY
make.believe

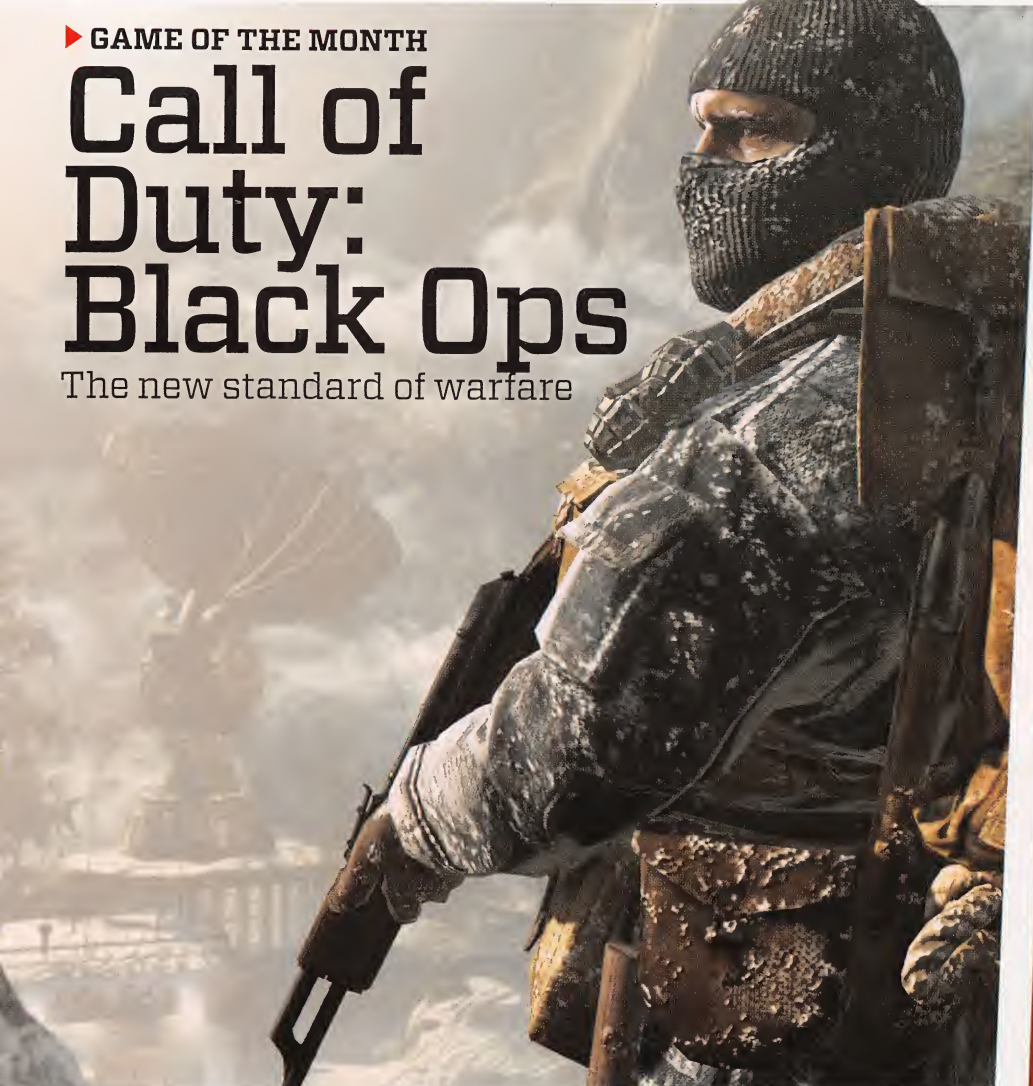
©2010 Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "PS3" and "PS3" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "SONY" is a registered trademark of Sony Corporation. "make.believe" is a trademark of the same company. "Broadband internet service required. Users are responsible for broadband access fees. Charges apply for some content. Users under 18 require parental consent. PlayStation®Network and PlayStation®Store subject to terms of use and not available in all countries and languages. All Rights Reserved. MUBI ©2008 - 2010. "La Dolce Vita" is available to watch in Australia and New Zealand. "Pan's Labyrinth" is available to watch in Australia and New Zealand. "4 months, 3 weeks, 2 days" is available in Australia, Denmark, New Zealand and Norway. "8 1/2" is available in Australia, Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden. "...And God created Woman" is available in Australia and New Zealand. "Goodbye Lenin" is available in Australia and New Zealand. "Whitlall and I" is available in Australia and New Zealand. "SP52143 096M" available in Australia, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, UK, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway New Zealand, Portugal, Sweden.

in review

► GAME OF THE MONTH

Call of Duty: Black Ops

The new standard of warfare



Review ratings

- 10 Incredible:** Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.
- 9 Excellent:** An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.
- 8 Great:** Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.
- 7 Good:** A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.
- 6 Decent:** This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.
- 5 Mediocre:** A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.
- 4 Poor:** Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.
- 3 Very disappointing:** Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.
- 2 Terrible:** Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.
- 1 The worst:** Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. OPS has handed out this score only once.

This Month

- 60** Call of Duty: Black Ops
- 66** Assassin's Creed Brotherhood
- 70** Need For Speed Hot Pursuit
- 72** Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom
- 74** Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II
- 75** EA SPORTS MMA
- 75** Prince of Persia Trilogy
- 76** Rock Band 3
- 78** Splatterhouse
- 79** James Bond 007: Blood Stone
- 80** God of War: Ghost of Sparta
- 80** Valkyria Chronicles II



▲ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.

Play this
if you like

Modern Warfare 2

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR:

ACTIVISION

DEVELOPER: TREYARCH

PLAYERS: 1-16

RRP: \$119.95

Call of Duty: Black Ops

Always bet on black

When equipping a shotgun loaded with the new Dragon's breath rounds, the user and the weapon enter into an agreement. To the human the boomstick says, "if you get me within urinating distance of our enemy, I promise to do three things in the fraction of a second: blind him, turn him into dog meat and set what's left of his carcass on fire. That's why they built me, that's why you've been camping in this stairwell for twenty minutes, that's how I roll".

To the shotgun, the human responds thusly, "I accept that if I'm not close enough to smell my enemy's aftershave, it'll take us a dozen shots to drop him and you'll probably earn me a nickname in-line with your own model number: SPAS-12. But I'm willing risk that for the power to end fools with one orgasmic squeeze of

your trigger. Now let us sally forth and flash-fry some fools."

Much like weapon choice, when approaching any *Call of Duty* game, we think that priorities are important. Picking off the AI soldier on the rooftop with the rocket launcher: priority. Hunting down the online jerk-face who's talking trash and glitching his way through prestige: double priority. In the spirit of that, we're going to turn this review on its head and start with what matters most for *Call of Duty* folk: murdering in multiplayer.

'Addictive' is the term we'd use to best describe this new online experience; as it's the same twitch gaming we all know and love, now fused with gambling. A currency system has been implemented into *Call of Duty: Black Ops* and it allows you to buy kick-arse weapons,

accessories and clothes. It also gives you the freedom to purchase what you want, when you want it, rather than being railroaded into unlocking crap you don't need. That's right folks, if you have the moolah (COD points) you can grab almost any perk, piece of equipment and weapon attachment straight away. It's like having a Kmart for killers.

Fortunately, the earning of these points isn't too difficult thanks to the bevy of returning favourite modes and the debut of wager matches. The latter is a collection of four Free-For-All match types where every player participating can put their CODs on the table for a potentially huge payoff (or a costly, screen-punching defeat). If you're a seasoned veteran hoping to witness some new life breathed into *Call of Duty*, these six-player matches can prove to be adrenaline-filled experiences thanks to the arbitrary rules placed upon each firefight. For example, 'One in the Chamber' drops you all into an arena with a handgun, one bullet and a knife. Our personal favourite is 'Sharp Shooter', a challenge where everyone's weapons change randomly every 45 seconds. The only knockback to this mode is that we noticed that the wager matches are incredibly lag-sensitive. If you get lumped with a dodgy host or your significant other decides to smash YouTube in another room, essentially, you're already dead and poorer. You just don't know it yet.

A less risky avenue for earning sweet dough-ray-me is through contracts. These are special challenges that spit out rewards and must be completed during the course of any multiplayer mode within a set amount of gameplay time. Challenges range from stabbing opponents in the back, to notching up a set number of kills with a particular (read:

They came in peace, they went in pieces



"Hunting down the online jerk-face who's **talking trash and glitching** his way through prestige: double priority"



crappy) weapon. Contracts are ever-changing too; the rewards you'll receive vary, their availability cycles regularly and you can only have three contracts running at any time.

It's an ingenious, yet flawed new mechanic. For the individual player it's great; succeed and you can often quadruple your money and buy that pony you always wanted – fail and those points are gone forever. These challenges also spice up the gameplay and make everyone broaden their tactical horizons. On the other hand, it can be swear-jar annoying when you're in a Team Deathmatch and your side gets thoroughly bent over because half of your teammates are trying to nail the 'snipe x amount of people with akimbo Uzis' contract. It's early days yet, but we're predicting there'll be problems.

Aside from that, Treyarch has reined in the custom killstreak rewards, but have also included a bunch of cool stuff. Of these additions the RC car isn't as annoying or

All the cool kids are calling this 'Blops'.
Saying two words takes way too long.

Central Perk

These little friends will be there for you

Tier 1

- **Flak Jacket:** Reduces explosive damage
- **Flak Jacket Pro:** Deflect fire damage, and safely toss back grenades
- **Ghost:** Undetectable by the Spy Plane and Blackbird
- **Ghost Pro:** Undetectable by aircraft, IR scopes and Sentry Guns
- **Hardline:** Killstreaks require one less kill to trigger
- **Hardline Pro:** Change the contents of a Care Package
- **Lightweight:** Move faster
- **Lightweight Pro:** No fall damage
- **Scavenger:** Steal ammo from your fallen enemies
- **Scavenger Pro:** Start with extra magazines, and get grenades from fallen enemies

Tier 2

- **Hardened:** Bullets penetrate better
- **Hardened Pro:** Increased bullet damage to killstreaks
- **Scout:** Hold breath longer
- **Scout Pro:** Switch weapons faster
- **Sleight Of Hand:** Faster reloads
- **Sleight Of Hand Pro:** ADS with all weapons, except sniper rifles
- **Steady Aim:** Increased hip-fire accuracy
- **Steady Aim Pro:** Faster ADS after sprinting
- **Warlord:** Equip two attachments to your primary weapon
- **Warlord Pro:** Start with one extra lethal and tactical grenade

Tier 3

- **Hacker:** Ability to detect enemy equipment and explosives
- **Hacker Pro:** Booby trap enemy Care Packages and turn enemy killstreaks and equipment friendly
- **Marathon:** Longer sprint
- **Marathon Pro:** Unlimited duration
- **Ninja:** Silent movement
- **Ninja Pro:** Make no noise, and hear all enemies louder
- **Second Chance:** Ability to use your pistol before dying
- **Second Chance Pro:** Survive longer, and get revived by teammates
- **Tactical Mask:** Protects against Nova Gas
- **Tactical Mask Pro:** Reduces the effects of flash and concussion grenades



overpowered as all those 'Interwebs teaser trailer experts' lead us all to believe. It can be acquired easily enough via three kills, but after you activate it, its engine makes such a loud noise that you always hear it coming and it self-detonates after a short while. So rest easy, it's not a game-breaker at all.

On the topic of adverse balancing and potential glitch tactics, Treyarch has certainly looked into some of the rorts that made *Modern Warfare 2* a pain in the arse.

Noob tubes (or 'underslung grenade launchers' to the layman) are no longer a rage issue. Not only have their reload times, firing frequency and close quarters damage looked at, but the perk combinations that allowed people to constantly replenish them have been addressed as well. Even still, issues will always arise when shrewd-minded players 'test' a game longer than its playtesters ever could, and *Black Ops* is already showing a few cracks.

Most of the multiplayer seems relatively balanced enough, but at the time of writing the MP5 is looking considerably overpowered. Equipping it makes you as ferocious and agile as a panther on PCP.

Pre-empting such unforeseen problems, Treyarch has promised to be vigilant with regards to patching the game and they'll even punish repeat abusers of any issue they can't shore up. If you spot somebody being a douchebag you now have an opportunity to do something about it. For the first time in the series, clips from online gameplay can be recorded and shared online – either with friends or Treyarch themselves. So the next time you feel like going prone inside of a rock or underneath the map for an unfair advantage, think twice, glitcheroo.

Beyond some patchable peccadilloes; in its current state *Black Ops* offers a dizzying amount of customisation options for returning veterans. Sticking with the game will eventually earn you the right to make your own emblems, clan tags and callsigns, along with face paint, gear decals and tattoos. Obviously you get the same level of equipment and weapon customisation as *Modern Warfare 2* (see our boxouts), but the old-tech nature of the guns may ruffle the feathers of folks who got attached to the last game's über-guns. We imagine that'll change after a short period of adjustment though – because hey, how long can you hate on a light machine gun called the 'Stoner'?

If you tend to avoid the abusive shenanigans of online multiplayer like a hole in the head



All of the levels take place in the summer, as this exception to the rule proves



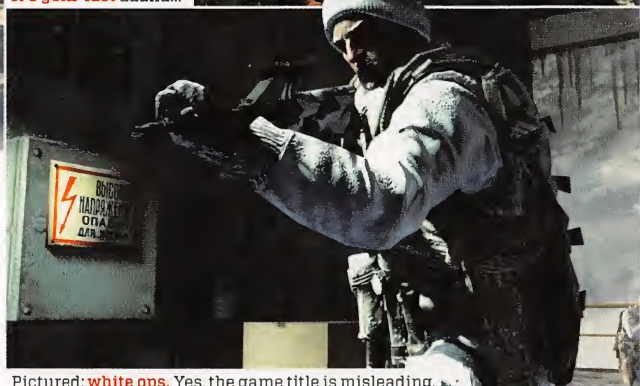
Audio cue: the hauntingly sad music from Platoon.



"Stop tripping yourself, stop tripping yourself, stop t"



"I'm on a heli aaand. It's goin' fast aaand..."



Pictured: white ops. Yes, the game title is misleading.

Reload your damn gun, or reload the checkpoint. Your choice.



— and we know there are a few of you in this category — *Black Ops* offers plenty of offline diversions to keep you amused. First of all, there's a Combat Training mode which allows you to hone your tactics offline against A.I. bots in both Free-For-All and Team Deathmatch. This is a great mode for struggling newbies and even comes with its own separate progression system to give you something to strive for. Once you're up to speed with the fast-paced matches of *Call of Duty*, you can then take the next baby-step with online split-screen — a reintroduced feature from *Call of Duty 3* that lets you and a mate take on the world as a dynamic duo.

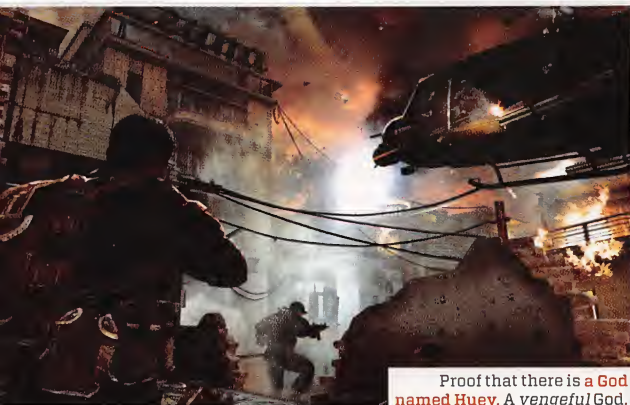
Speaking of working together, the zombie co-op mode of *Call of Duty: World at War* returns and is even better this time around. This undead onslaught can be tackled solo, two-player split-screen or via four-player online and each participant takes on the role of either Nixon, JFK, Robert McNamara or Castro as they fight off zombies at the Pentagon. We love this mode not only because it makes history books come alive with *undeath*, but also because it's just as tense and chaotic as ever. In short, Treyarch has kicked another goal.

"How long can you hate on a light machine gun called the 'Stoner'?"

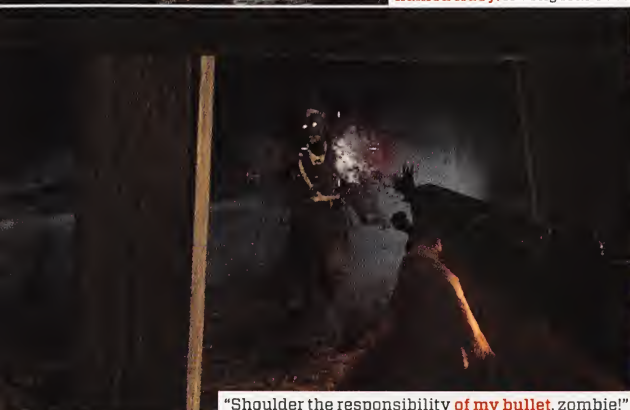
If you're a staunch soloist and multiplayer — in any way, shape or form — doesn't interest you, you'll be happy to know that *Black Ops* has one of the best single-player campaigns in the series. The plot here is so unrelenting it even bleeds into the main menu where 'you', Alex Mason a 'wet-work' guy for the United States

government, is being mercilessly interrogated in front of a bank of 1960s television sets. Plying you with

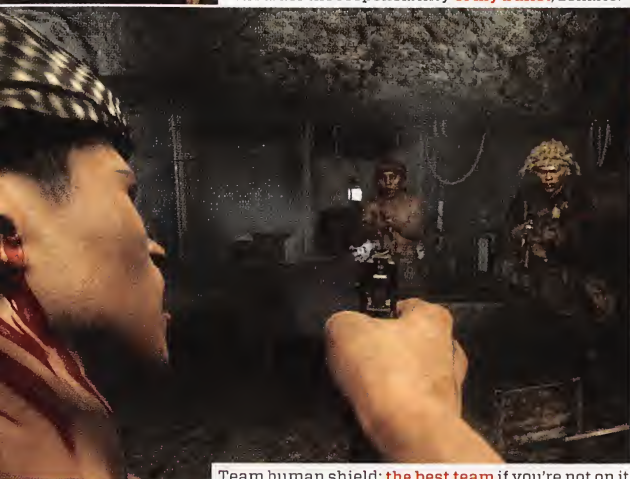
a mixture of psychological abuse, drugs and about 1.21 gigawatts worth of 'pretty please', your mysterious interrogator(s) demand that you divulge the nature of your previous covert ops. What follows is an utterly enthralling conspiracy tale with a timeline that jumps around more than a Tarrantino film about gangster pogosticks. The first mission kicks off in Cuba in 1961, introduces you to fellow spooks Woods and Bowman, and tasks you with the assassination of Fidel Castro. Thanks to the repeated suggestions of past places and events from your captors, you'll experience a fairly disjointed campaign that flits about to a bunch of different conflicts. In some cases, an entire mission will concern an anecdote retold to Mason but effectively relived in the first-person. ►



Proof that there is a God named Huey. A vengeful God.



"Shoulder the responsibility of my bullet, zombie!"



Team human shield: the best team if you're not on it

"Hey, this VC is cheating man. He's a goddamned tracer"



Never. Ever. Call shotgun for a carseat in 'Nam



Pro tip: in Vietnam you're always looking for some guy named Charlie

Honestly, it's quite a slick way to facilitate the usual *Call of Duty* plot schtick where you're fighting the same war through the viewpoints of multiple people. That said, in the context of the series, we've never seen it pulled off with this amount of flair. *Black Ops* is a supremely cinematic experience that is quite clever in the way it seamlessly interweaves and blurs what 'a level' is.

You could be slogging your way through 'Nam in '68, only to have the droning voices of your current day captors grill you on your actions. Or you could be whisked back to reality to clarify a fact, only to be flung through another memory wormhole back to a non-shooting level where Mason must tour the Pentagon or meet the president. The only thing more impressive than the constant narrative shifting of this story, is the way Treyarch keeps it mesmerising and, most importantly, understandable. This is one rollicking rollercoaster of a yarn, but if you pay attention you'll never lose contact with the rails.

Stripping away the psychotropic drugs and the impressive cinematic transitions, the gameplay in *Black Ops* single-player feels much like the *Modern Warfare* games. You're still scooting, shooting and dancing that old familiar soft-lock, squeeze trigger tango.

Without spoiling too much, the transitory nature of the plot will mainly offer you weapons from '61 to '68, the vehicle sections are generously sprinkled throughout the game and there are a few flashbacks where you'll get back into the WWII swing. The game benefits greatly from the variety and though some of the explosive moments can miss their mark and feel a little too 'Jean Claude Van Damme-y', we were wowed once or twice with some really cool set-piece moments.

In terms of actual improvements to how the shooting gets done (excluding the one-time 'action-moment' mechanics that Treyarch rolls out for a special situations), the list is thin. Probably the most useful addition is the ability

And business is good...

Kill-streaks at a glance

- 3x RC-XD: a remote control car strapped with explosives
- 3x Spy Plane: shows enemies on the mini-map (can be shot down)
- 4x Counter Spy Plane: temporarily disables enemy mini-map
- 4x SAM Turret: airdrop a placeable turret to destroy aircraft
- 5x Care Package: airdrop a random killstreak or ammo crate
- 5x Napalm Strike: aircraft cooks an area with Napalm
- 6x Mortar Team: target three locations to bombard with strikes
- 6x Sentry Gun: airdrop a placeable Sentry Gun
- 7x Attack Helicopter: call in a support helicopter
- 7x Valkyrie Rockets: launcher with remote controlled rockets
- 8x Blackbird: shows enemy position/direction can't be shot down
- 8x Rolling Thunder: carpet bombing airstrike
- 9x Chopper Gunner: nine kills (be the gunner of an attack helicopter)
- 11x Attack Dogs: angry pooches that hunt down the enemy
- 11x Gunship: pilot an attack helicopter (kill absolutely everybody)



"Mission abort, HQ. I have forgotten my chapstick"

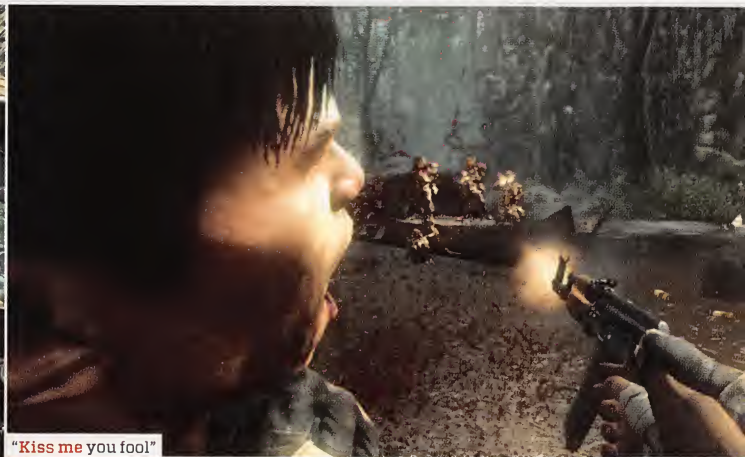
to speedily dive into a prone position. It's as simple as it is effective; while holding sprint, a tap of the crouch button makes you launch down onto the deck, or even slide on your knees depending on the height of cover you're aiming to get behind. Frankly, it's an absolute lifesaver, particularly on Veteran difficulty and in competitive online multiplayer. Unfortunately, in Zombie mode it serves zero purpose, other than making you look like a delicious 'floor pie' to the undead.

There's also the matter of the mechanic we like to call Breach And Clear 2.0. This is no longer just about kicking in a measly door to 'bullet-time' the baddies beyond. Now a breach section could entail flying down a zip line with an uzi, rappelling through a guardhouse or using one Victor Charlie as a human shield as you make him mow down his buddies with his own AK. But once again, we found it a shame that these moments were so few and far between. In a perfect world these mechanics would be radder if we could

trigger them anytime we wished.

But amongst all this effort to make *Black Ops* a John Woo wet dream, unfortunately Treyarch has repeated some past mistakes. Apart from some of the vehicle sections where the landscape really opens up in scale, Treyarch hasn't seen fit to evolve the visual engine much in the short-game. Some of the lip-synching (not all) still has a certain, undefinable 'muppetry' to it and some of the in-game cutscenes are marred by some rough edges (be it texture or animation based) which momentarily drop you out of your 'interactive movie' headspace. Speaking of which, Alex Mason (a.k.a. Sam Worthington) can't hold an American accent. Annoying.

The animation and AI routines of the enemies still suffer from the same old gremlins too. A few times we got more tactically creative than the game could anticipate for and we saw bizarre instances where a friendly AI and an enemy AI would fight back-to-back in complete obliviousness for a few seconds.



"Kiss me you fool"



The 'look, your shoe's untied' tactic works, butthead.

"This caters to every conceivable configuration of gamer out there"

There's also the frustrating chestnut that is respawning enemies. In some areas, if you deliberately hang back and pick off people, you're punished with an influx of everlasting 'black-ops-stoppers'. Apparently, what the game *really* wanted you to do was cross an invisible event line, mop up the 'now finite' force and continue. Other times you'll try to anticipate this by pushing forward beyond safe cover only to be slapped on the wrist because the game wants you to stay put until a scripted event changes the proverbial 'red' light to 'green'. The problem with both of these scenarios; the mode the game 'wants you to be in' isn't always telegraphed well. A few obvious orange lights would have helped.

Be that as it may, *Call of Duty: Black Ops* still represents one hell of a hefty package. It's bursting with hundreds of hours of entertainment that caters to every conceivable configuration of gamer out there, be they an adversarial gamer, a co-op connoisseur or a staunch offline soloist.

Generosity in content, slick presentation and a few multiplayer bolt-ons seem to be the only real facets that have witnessed evolution here. In terms of gameplay enhancements, with *Black Ops* Treyarch has played it a little too safe and clung a little too closely to what worked before for our tastes. Veterans may expect much more from it.

That said, this is easily one of the best action games of the year, and if you do allow yourself to be strapped in, you'll be mercilessly mainlined with vitamin action. **Adam Mathew**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Aside from some larger vehicle levels this doesn't have the same wow-factor as the previous titles.

SOUND Well-acted for the most part but Alex Mason forgets that he isn't Australian sometimes. Oldman makes up for it.

CONTROLS More of the same. The dive-prone move is much appreciated and the choppers handle pretty good too. All things considered.

REPLAY VALUE This offers you a lion's share of gameplay. A multitude of multiplayer modes, an enthralling single-player, co-op zombie shooting, a hidden top-down arcade game and *Zork*.

Verdict

A huge amount of value for money and a decent successor. Grab it, now.

9

**Play this
if you like**

Assassin's Creed II

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION
ADVENTURE

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
MONTREAL

PLAYERS: 1 - 8

RRP: \$109.95

**"The fierce Firenzian
now packs a posse"**



Assassin's Creed Brotherhood

Your one-man wolf pack just grew by twelve



"Cause I'm hungry like the - oof!"

When you slice through the pretence and get to the guts of it, Ezio Auditore is in many ways similar – possibly even superior – to Batman. Think about it. Both fight injustice, use a city like their own personal jungle gym, afford themselves zero chin protection and always strike brooding poses on ledges.

Practicality and petty morality are the only two things that separate these men. While Bats preserves life and operates almost exclusively after dark, pretty much any ol' time is stab o'clock for Ezio. Also, though Batman has wealth, he uses his own science skills to whip up wonderful toys. Ezio is similarly rich but has the good sense to freelance out his boring gadget work to one of the world's most celebrated geniuses. This little arrangement leaves him with much more time to kill – literally.

Now, thanks to *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, the Italian stallion is set to one-up the dark knight yet again. Realising that the 'lone wolf' approach is strictly for goofballs, this fierce Firenzian now packs a posse. Targeting a person and tapping **B** will cause Ezio to silently raise his hand, clench his fist and initiate a BAM, or 'Brotherhood Assist Move' (which is one of the most awesomely apt acronyms ever).

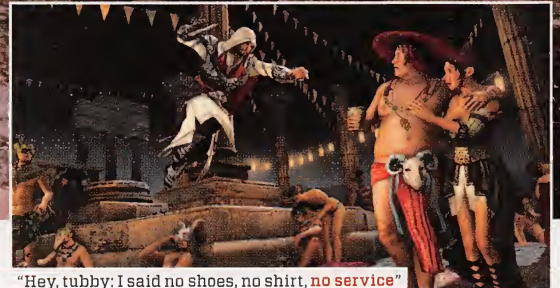
Before your victim even has a chance to pee themselves properly, two hooded assassins jack-in-the-box and give him a shiv. Bam! These ambushes can occur in a number of different ways too; your pals may thunder in on horses, they might fire surgical arrow strikes from afar or they could just sidle up, shutdown and then melt off into the crowd. Regardless of which way the

murder gets made, commanding your minions to exterminate is just as satisfying as sticking the mark yourself – perhaps even more so.

But what's truly surprising is how attached you'll grow to these guys and girls. Using carrier pigeon coops setup around the game world, Ezio can issue them assignments set around greater Europe. Tasking your novice Assassins wisely is essential to make them gain experience, and you can even customize their appearance, skills and weapons training by spending the skill points they've earned. A mission might take ten minutes of game time and they all offer a percentage of success that's calculated by how difficult the task is, how many killers you assign to it and how skilled they happen to be. Be warned: your cut-throats can actually cark it on these missions, so pair them up. Always use the bloody buddy system: slay together, stay together.

Though it's not the deepest mechanic in the world, watching your own brotherhood flourish is hugely satisfying. Providing you destroy certain enemy towers in the game, you can eventually recruit up to twelve fledgling assassins. Where does one find a dozen hardened killers? Do sociopaths simply grow on trees? No, not exactly. You're essentially recruiting the downtrodden citizens of Rome; able-bodied men and women who are sick of being harassed by the insidious Templar faction known as the Borgia.

Your first introduction to these evil bastards is when they interrupt you mid-shag by smashing up your precious Monteriggioni villa. Not cool, Borgia. Number one: we spent too much time and money pimping up that brothel, and number two:



"Hey, tubby: I said no shoes, no shirt, no service"



"He's spilt all the jam! Are you not entertained?!"

we may be enemies, but the cock-block is never, ever justified. To make a long story short, after this heinous assault goes down, master assassin Ezio decides to set up a McKillin' franchise in Rome.

To do this, you'll need to rebuild both your wealth and Rome itself, which has fallen into disrepair thanks to the corrupt rule of the Templars. Just like the villa in *Assassin's Creed II*, the idea is to invest in the city to witness its evolution and unlock rewards. You'll also have to assassinate key Borgia lieutenants and destroy the towers they reside in to hamper their influence. This civic-minded terrorism unlocks a plethora of new missions and opportunities. Though the previous game offered a few different cities, Rome really is an awe-inspiring environment that is three times bigger than Florence, includes a catacomb system and is set across five districts that are surprisingly varied. ▶



"Scuse me, pardon, coming through, mind your throat"

It's good to be number one

Assassin's Creed Brotherhood on PS3 features exclusive free additional downloadable content called the Copernicus Conspiracy which will be accessible for download on PSN when you read this. It'll give you several new missions through the famous renaissance astronomer Copernicus. Extra content for players includes courier, assassination and protection missions. Ezio will be tasked with foiling the conspiracy against Copernicus and defending his philosophy. Man, history's just comin' alive up in this bitch!

White men can jump



The loser here? The horse

“Ubisoft Montreal has masterfully crafted a truly unique and worthwhile online experience”

One of our biggest concerns with the last game was the combat system. Thankfully Ubisoft has listened to fan feedback and this is now much swifter and more dynamic. The focus is now on taking the offensive in any scrap, because striking first is just as effective a tactic as spamming the counter-attack function.

If you do manage to chain some hits together to earn that ‘mace in the face’ kill animation, you can now target another enemy during that execution to set off yet another insta-kill. If you aren’t interrupted you can theoretically chain

this until everybody is dead. That said, the AI in this game is more aggressive and enemies now attack

simultaneously, so you’ll still need those mad counter-attack reflexes of yours.

Along with the upgrade to his basic swordsmanship, Ezio gets a whole slew of new Leonardo gadgets and can use melee and ranged weapons at the same time as well (our favourite tactics being the hidden pistol and the ability to hurl a battle axe). There are new enemy types in

addition to those seen in *Assassin’s Creed II* such as arquebusiers, papal guards and horsemen.

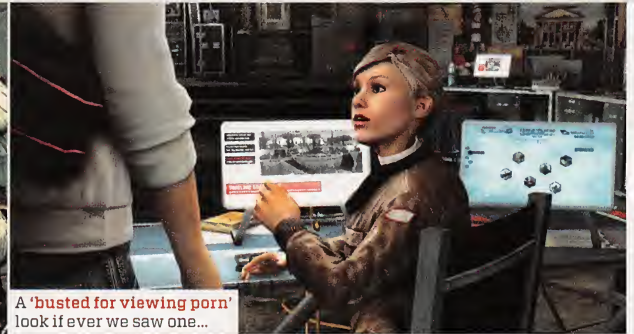
On the topic of horses, they play a larger role in all of *Brotherhood*. You can whistle for a mount at anytime and they can be ridden through the city streets (for the first time) or they can even be used in acrobatic sequences and advanced combat as well. Like some sort of *Grand Theft Horse-o* you can now do ride-bys with ranged weapons, or if you pine for someone else’s equine you can simply commandeer it by doing a horse-to-horse assassination. Greater access to horses, along with a new fast-travel tunnel system, definitely eliminate the ho-hum we felt in the last game when trying to get around renaissance Italy.

It’s not just the tweaks to the single-player alone that make *Brotherhood* superior to what went before, this sequel marks the first time the main series has seen multiplayer action. Not content to just tack on a mindless hack ‘n’ slash hoedown, Ubisoft Montreal has masterfully crafted a truly unique and worthwhile online experience that dovetails perfectly with both the plot of the series and our desire to stab perfect strangers

Surprisingly, you’re not an assassin – you’re one of the order’s arch-rivals, the Templars, and the ‘multiplayer’ is really an Abstergo ‘training simulation’. Your ultimate objective is to learn how



Not the sort of **fan service** we were looking for



A '**busted for viewing porn**' look if ever we saw one...



...and here's the '**you're gonna go blind**' intervention

to be an actual hard-ass by playing a bunch of different game modes and maps including Florence, Rome, Castel Gandolfo and Siena. All of the single-player techniques work here; crowd-blending makes you invisible to other players, sloppy approaches soon devolve into messy brawls and being stealthy earns you the opportunity to bag one-hit assassinations for extra points.

The more points you glean from your victims, the more XP you get to level up and unlock cooler looking gear and a series of perks, streaks and abilities. Abilities are a bunch of cooldown style skills (think: smoke bombs or a hidden guns). Perks are passive skills, which can be equipped before the match and are active all the time (like the power to switch all nearby NPCs to your skin-type). Streaks are bonuses awarded for reaching a certain number of kills (our favourite is an improved compass that better guides you to your quarry).

Far and away the best mode is Wanted, where eight killers are given one specific target (whilst becoming a specific target themselves for a completely different player). A basic arrow gives you the general vicinity of your victim - but if you run at them out in the open (like a rookie), they'll be warned of your presence. They will begin a cat-and-mouse chase sequence where the unfortunate target must barrel through NPC crowds or take to the rooftops to escape your line of sight. Technically they can defend themselves, but they'll lose points for anything they murder that isn't their real target. Patience and skill is duly rewarded.

We spent the lion's share of our time replaying Wanted to death (pun intended), but the other modes offer some fun too. There's Alliance, which has you and a buddy selecting the same skin (Soldier, Smuggler, Engineer, Courtesan, Barber, Priest, Noble, Prowler, Executioner, Doctor or Blacksmith) and the idea is to kill as a coordinated team.

Each of these skins have their own unique assassination moves and signature weapons to use, and you'll need to mimic the behaviour of your NPC archetype to blend into the city scene correctly. It's no good being a courtesan that scampers up walls like a horny spelunker; you're better off casually sashaying down the street in the hope of bagging that perfect ambush.

It's moments like the aforementioned that make *Brotherhood's* multiplayer one of the most refreshing romps we've had in years. Staying two steps ahead of a would-be murderer, whilst repeatedly outsmarting your own prey, is champagne gaming. That said, twitch gamers may very well balk at this style of multi; the shrewd level-headed ninja will always win out over the tactless, ADD idiot who just thrashes about the streets.

The multiplayer in *Brotherhood* is but a delicious cherry though. Every mission in the single-player now offers a taxing 'full sync' challenge that tasks you with additional objectives, like not getting spotted at all, or not touching the ground, or chaining a certain amount of kills together. Couple that with an absolute butt-load of additional puzzle lairs, romance sub-missions, plus a plethora of guild missions - and you're looking at a good 20 to 25 hours worth of single-player game. To all those developers who are churning out short-duration 'AAA' games (minus multiplayer), we hope you're taking notes.

But while we award this amazing game our highest acclaim, that doesn't make it a

perfect experience. Though the texture pop-in that irritated us in *Assassin's Creed II* has been tamed, we *once* spotted a bizarre glitch that offered us the wrong sort of immersive experience (like some soldiers that were, literally, immersed up to their necks in the ground). Also, it seems to us that the conspiracy plot of the series is becoming a little - how can we put this - *cuckoo French*. This tale of Desmond and Ezio wound up unexpectedly and the overall outcome left us staring at the screen like a dog confronted with a catfood commercial.

Beyond those isolated issues (that can be fixed with by either a patch or a sequel with an explanation), *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood* is a more than a worthy addition to the series canon. The similar setting of renaissance Italy will trick folks into assuming this is a half-arsed expansion, but honestly, this feels like *Assassin's Creed 2.99*. Don't be fooled by *Brotherhood's* cunningly familiar disguise. Mark it as a fresh target, pounce and take it down. **Adam Mathew**



"Take back what you said about my **man pantaloons**"

Gene theory

There are a quite a few modern day sequences in *Brotherhood* that feature Desmond and Lucy. Fortunately, they're actually interesting, as the pair are now very assassin-like thanks to their time in the Animus. Something else we appreciated, while they're escaping from the templars they both hide out in present-day Monteriggioni. It's strangely cool to explore it 500 years later.

Final Say

PRESENTATION Fixes some of the visual gremlins of the last game. Rome is mind-numbing in its scale and beauty.

SOUND Turn on the subtitles, or you'll miss half of the Italian dialogue. Otherwise an absolute class act.

CONTROLS If they ain't broke, don't fix 'em. Slicing through the city streets as Ezio is still a pleasure

REPLAY VALUE A shining example of replayability. Single-player overflows with objectives, multiplayer will cut you deep.

Verdict

One-ups the stellar *Assassin's Creed II* in every way. They could have easily called this *AC: III*. Acquire without delay.

10

If the real police force had these, we'd join in a second

You
2:58.61

Play this
if you like

Burnout Paradise

Need For Speed:
Hot Pursuit 2

Info

FORMAT: PS3

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER: CRITERION

GAMES

RRP: \$99.95

Need for Speed Hot Pursuit

Out burns the competition



We suspect that last year's excellent *Shift* didn't make as much of an impact as EA anticipated. That semi-serious sim has given way to a positively *Burnout*-inspired iteration that liberally takes the better bits of old *NFS* titles and makes this gorgeous fast paced treat.

Many gamers are going to have fond memories of the PS2 game that shares part of the title, and they'll be thrilled to see the cops back in the race to the finish line. Half the game's about being the fuzz, chasing racers on the highways and streets of Seacrest County, and you'll also be the guy on the run.

Not every event as cop/racer features the other side of the law. *Hot Pursuit*'s also about vanilla racing, one-on-one duels, and weapons based thrashing as a racer, and as a cop you'll be trying to shut down a race with brute force,

spike strips and helicopters, or rushing to an emergency several kilometres away with nothing but civilian traffic impeding your progress. For a game that's unapologetically about long, fat arcade powerslides on black ribbons of bitumen and the thrill of the chase, *Hot Pursuit* also restrains itself by mixing up the events you'll take part in.

Progress as your career as a racer and cop are split in two. There is, thankfully, no painful narrative justifying why you're both a boy racer and man of the law – you just are. Finishing in third or above in racer events unlock more of the same, and the same goes for cop events. Play to your strengths if you want: it's entirely possible to smash through all of the cop campaign and then do the same as a racer, but we suspect you'll find it gets a bit repetitive to do so. The way events unlock is varied, and



you'll experience new parts of the map on a regular basis

Whichever way you play it, you're rarely far from achieving something. *Hot Pursuit* does an excellent job of rewarding your efforts. Within the first few hours you'll be given the keys to a tonne of new cars, events, then weapons on both sides of the fence, while the more exotic machines remain tantalisingly out of reach, demanding many thousands of bounty points to be driven.

Further on the in-game trophy system adds to your reputation or bounty, and you'll notice quite a few cheeky nods to Criterion's other racing series. Perform a certain number of powerslides over a specific length and you'll rack up XP. Same goes for tailgating over certain amount of time, or performing takedowns, er, we mean busts.

All this adds to your nitro bar. For racers, the bar burns slowly but your top speed can't match that of the cops. Conversely, cop cars have acceleration rivalling a jet but chew through nitro like a goat through a tin can.

The nitro bar is usually on the boil, and while it's great to nail a *Burnout Paradise*-style burnout – filling the bar all the way to the top then completely draining it with no collisions – the smart player dabs at it in mid range to increase acceleration (especially uphill or on dirt), or for compensating a slow exit on turns.



Sparks: not the best thing to see when you're travelling at 216km/h



Myth: spinning your tyres makes you look 'heaps sick'



Got motor running. Headed out onto highway. Therefore, wild



"Hello, AAMI? I need to make a claim for about a **billion dollars...**"

The arsenal of weapons is shared between the two sides. EMP blasts wash off an opponent's speed and cause hefty damage. Spike strips blow out tyres (though this resets pretty quickly). Cops get spike-dropping helicopters and roadblocks, while racers get an insane turbo boost and a radio jammer. Unlike *Blur* weapons can only be used in one way and fit in more organically than you'd assume.

It may seem like an odd thing to point out in a game where the racing and intense chases are the hook, but the game's production values account for a huge chunk of its charm. Transitioning from open road to blitzing through a tunnel with sirens and flashing lights is a fireworks-at-night

hard drive, however) the sound effects are amazing. You're rarely far from an explosive burst of nitro, or bearing the squealing tyres as they struggle to keep traction. Engines sound ready to snap off their leash and the cop radio chatter never feels repetitive. The lull before a turbo kicks in is the aural equivalent of the gut-lifting arc of a rollercoaster before an uncontrolled descent.

Need For Speed shines when you're in the thick of battle, dodging spike strips and roadblocks. But it also makes you appreciate the quieter times when the wailing sirens and radio noise has stopped, and it's just you and the roar of your engine in free roam mode.



Cop This

All the cars have a police/tracer equivalent, which means Seacrest County must have pockets deeper than a Chilean mine. All of them look like they could exist - a Koenigsegg CCX is just as legitimate as a Subaru WRX with the blues and twos - and while the car models aren't especially detailed they're still impressive. The turbo boost and top speed is different on a cop car compared to a racer, so this duplication is more than a lazy double-up.

moment. The frame rate rarely drops and in free roam mode the entire world streams off the disc - impressively without needing to install.

Though the licensed music's disappointing (you can use music playlists of the music stored on your

So, yes, while we're excited about *Hot Pursuit*, you need to be online to make this truly compelling. As soon as you've completed an event you can see just how far ahead or behind your friends you are on the Autolog. Leave someone a cheeky message to taunt them to do better, and if you have a rivalry going with people on your friends list there'll be a rattling list of generated recommendations of times to beat. It's infuriating to see that a PSN friend has bettered your time. Like any good arcade racer, this is the reason for you to go back and do what you did, but faster.

Seacrest County feels a bit lifeless at times - a touch more traffic would've helped - but this is flat out fun, and more than likely the best *Need For Speed* game that's been out for a long time. There's definitely room in the roster for another 'serious' Speed title, but we absolutely love this. Your passion for GT5 shouldn't stop you buying this too. It's time for other arcade racers to play catch up. **Paul Taylor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Wicked lighting effects and a healthy frame rate embellish the impeccable production values. It looks great.

SOUND Can the in-game music and play your own playlists instead. Sound effects are suitably wild.

CONTROLS Once you're used to the slightly 'floaty' feeling you'll be looking to trim milliseconds off your PB.

REPLAY VALUE Addictive all round. Trying to knock your mates times off the Speedwall will keep you going as long as they do.

Verdict

Need For Speed comes home thanks to series newcomers Criterion. Damned addictive arcade fare - just make sure you're online.

9

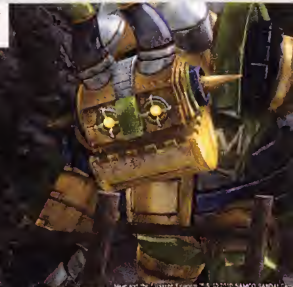


The Majin folk go to disturbing lengths to have perfect forelock overhang



Ninja headband forelock ensemble is GO.

Goggles with tied-sweater forelock combo is STOP



Clowns + moss-covered golums = this



Play this if you like
Ico

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ADVENTURE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTION: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: GAME
REPUBLIC
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$109.95

Final Say

PRESENTATION A gorgeous vibe muddled by supremely outdated visuals.

SOUND The lilting strings are nice enough, but very, very repetitive. Don't leave the game sitting for more than a minute; you'll go mad.

CONTROLS Stiff, imprecise and not always what you want them to be.

REPLAY VALUE A single-player journey with a very conclusive beginning, middle, and end. You will play it but once, but you'll treasure it.

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom

Modest of manner, but mighty of heart

Majin feels archaic. The camera is twitchy; jumping between platforms is an inexact science at best; 'combat' equates to 'bashing one button over and over again'. It even looks and sounds like it was made ten years ago, none too graphically and sonically dissimilar to titles released at the beginning of the PS3's lifespan. You remember – bland textures, expressionless faces, repetitive and unremarkable backing scores, hammy voice acting. So why would you bother?

This doesn't sound like a compliment, but it kind of is: *Majin* boasts *Ico*'s vibe in reverse, trading said cult PS2 hit's surrealistic hand-holding for something much more approachable. *Ico*'s gaunt, meandering princess becomes a dense, willful behemoth – the titular Majin – who looks out for you instead, and that's not all it has in common with Team Ico's stunning debut. The enemies you face? Dripping black shadow people, for the most part. For many seasoned gamers, the comparison will be instant and topical; Team Ico's 2011-bound *The Last Guardian* will deal with a similar bond between man and monster.

There's little question as to which will be the 'better' game, but where *Majin* can be brazenly unoriginal and mired in all kinds of things the genre loves to fall back on – collectables that power up your onscreen trouble-makers being the most prevalent – it's, well, quaint.

'Quaint' applying most judiciously to its storyline, which is the kind of wonderfully naïve fantasyland jaunt that might've reached Labyrinth-esque status (the Majin even bares a striking resemblance to Ludo) had it been released thirty years ago.

You play Tepeu, a thiefling young man who's decided to enlist the legendary Majin in helping him rid the world of an inky evil currently swallowing it whole. Just like *Ico*, there is mystery from the outset, and you will become attached to your disparate duo of skinny bandit and lumbering, monosyllabic minder. Their evolving interplay is what eventually overcomes *Majin*'s many contrived mechanics and laboured presentation.

You're rarely without the other, and as new abilities become available via unlocked bits of kit for both upstarts, the zaniness

of combat and the creative teamwork required to progress scale appropriately.

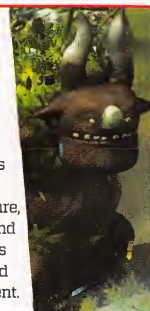
So while you'll be unconvinced by the visuals and voices behind the boy and his beast, when the Majin goes harumphing into battle to save you from the latest onslaught of sinister humanoid ooze, stopping only to breathe his healing gingivitis all over your battered body, you'll find yourself wondering: why this has done for you what the massive production of *Enslaved* could not. The answer? Heart, baby. Kid's got heart.

Toby McCasker



Ludo VS. Majin

If you've never seen the 1986 fantasy cult classic *Labyrinth*, you've never seen David Bowie's manhood straining inappropriately against some very tight tights. You've also never clapped eyes on Ludo, our heroine Jennifer Connelly's huge, hairy and hapless helper. The Majin here is clearly a direct descendant of this Jim Henson-hewn creature, the both of them sharing a simplicity of mind and an abundance of brute strength that's alternately great for lifting heavy stuff and swatting smaller irritants into the pavement.



Verdict

In the eyes of some, it deserves a lesser score, but this game has so much soul. Play it, adore it.

7



FREE* to join
to play

**PlayStation.
Network**



PlayStation®Move

Precision aiming with your motion controller

ALSO INCLUDES



THE GAME IS JUST THE START

The legendary Time Crisis™ returns with a brand new game as well as two bonus titles. Destroy everything in sight, including the hi-tech terrorists aiming to take you down. Invite your mates to join the battle, add to the carnage online and use the Move controller to make combat heart-pumpingly real. So get ready for the fire-fight and keep the ammo coming.

au.playstation.com



Violence



PS3™

PlayStation 3



SONY
make.believe

"I am your father" Really?!"
"No... I can't back that up"

Play this if
you like

God of War III

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR:

ACTIVISION

DEVELOPER:

LUCASARTS

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$99.95

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

Strong are you in the Force, but not that strong

The Force, much like Friday night beer goggles, can make you believe that 'size matters not'. But while Yoda's old axiom makes perfect sense when levitating an X-Wing – or enabling a chunky to get funky – it's a steaming load of Bantha poodoo when applied to the duration of a full priced videogame. Clocking in at a paltry five hours to complete on 'hard', *The Force Unleashed II* feels shorter than an Ewok's genitals.

Length hang-ups aside, Lucasarts has tightened up almost everything iffy about the original game, but they also managed to drop a hydro-spanner into the parts that were working fine to begin with. For example, *TFU* had a stellar, award-winning *Star Wars* plot – this sequel's storyline comes dangerously close to breaking established canon and, like Jabba's Sarlacc, it sucks you in, only to take you absolutely nowhere.

Conversely, while *TFU* had only average melee mechanics, *TFU II* has honed Starkiller's combat skills to a keen

lightsaber's edge. It's now a genuine pleasure to (literally) hack up swarms of enemies thanks to twin lightsabers and your Jedi's tighter traversal movements and psychotic nine-hit combos. That said, if you despised the platforming sections in the previous outing you'll be just as annoyed here; leap-frogging is as hit-and-miss as a spun around Stormtrooper.

Most of the Force powers from *TFU* return unchanged and there are two new worthy additions in the form of Mind Trick and Force Rage. The first allows you to convince weak-minded fools to top one another, or to end it all by base-jumping without a parachute. The second ability, Force Rage, basically sends you berserk for a limited time with all of Starkiller's lightsaber moves and Force powers being turned up to 11. This demi-god state certainly comes in handy later when enemy lightsaberists rock up and the sith really hits the fan.

Though the boss fights aren't particularly inspired and some quick-time variation would have made the mid-bosses



Ride the lightning, rocket-man. **Ride the lightning**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Beautiful looking cutscenes and the in-game graphics look markedly better.

SOUND Listening to Starkiller trick stormtroopers into suicide is rad but the script isn't as tight this time.

CONTROLS Furious flurries of lightsaber blows feel great, the Force power targeting is improved too.

REPLAY VALUE You'll smash it in five hours and then... twiddle your thumbs?

Verdict

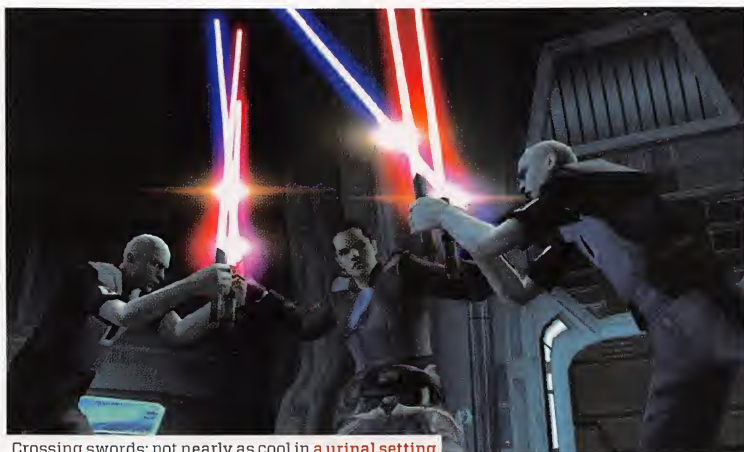
Gameplay is better than *TFU*, but it's shorter than a Kessel run.

6

more fun, the action in this sequel makes the previous outing look like a scruffy nerfherder. It's extremely unfortunate then that even with some additional 'bonus challenges' and an Unleashed difficulty to unlock, there is just barely enough game on this disc. Also, while the extra info for every single enemy and vehicle in the game is catalogued with the unmistakable OCD knowledge of a true *Star Wars* geek, the plot itself takes way too many liberties and will have followers of the extended universe tearing at their neckbeards with rage.

Is *The Force Unleashed II* the *Star Wars* game for you? That all depends greatly upon your own point of view, and the truths you cling to regarding size. If you just want to gobble up a quick, quality game; we can happily confirm that the action in this sequel suitably eclipses that of the original. That said, if you're hungering for an experience to digest and appreciate over a long time, you should know that not even a Sarlacc could stretch this snack out into a meal.

Adam Mathew



Crossing swords: not nearly as cool in a urinal setting

EA SPORTS MMA

UFC faces a dispute

Play this if you like

UFC Undisputed 2010

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SPORTS

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: EA SPORTS

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS

PLAYERS: 1-8

RRP: \$99.95



MMA, Rickrolled

The popularity of MMA is soaring. It's more technical than boxing. It's even safer than boxing. Fans are flocking to it in droves.

Where there are fans there's cash. THQ proved that with the well-received *UFC Undisputed* series right out of the gate. Now EA wants in.

EA Sports MMA makes a good first impression with responsive controls reminiscent of those in last year's superb *Fight Night Round 4*. You move your fighter with the left stick and throw punches with the right. You use the shoulder buttons to modify your strikes to target the body rather than the head, or to throw kicks. The face buttons are used for clinches, takedowns, submissions and changing your position on the ground.

There's an option to play with a totally different setup that uses face buttons for punches and kicks but we didn't like it. The default fighting style is quite different from that of the *UFC Undisputed* series and this is a good thing for a game trying to carve a name for itself.

Character customisation options are down on what we'd usually expect in an EA Sports title but the fighting style selections are fairly robust. While creating your Career mode fighter you'll be able to choose one of nine different specializations, all of which have key strengths and weaknesses. When you're done you'll meet your trainer, retired MMA champion Bas Rutten, and begin your journey.

Disappointingly the AI opponents aren't much chop on default difficulty, at least early on, and you can win fights simply by spamming jabs to the face for what seem like minutes at a time. We were getting a right royal teabagging in our first bout until we discovered our opponent simply refused to protect his face, so we just punched him in the mouth until he fell into what we can only presume was a sudden coma. The inline component promises a lot, so when we know more we'll let you know.

It's also a problem that punches and kicks don't usually feel as powerful as you'd like. In *Fight Night* haymakers sounded like truck accidents. Here they kind of feel like slightly over-zealous high-fives.

Good but not great. **Luke Reilly**

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Character models seem a bit pastier than their *Fight Night* brethren.

SOUND The crowds are okay but the commentary is stilted and repetitive.

CONTROLS Plays like a hybrid of *Fight Night* and *UFC Undisputed*. Fighting fans will adapt quickly.

REPLAY VALUE Solo won't last, but the huge slate of online community features will help if there's ever an online community to use them.

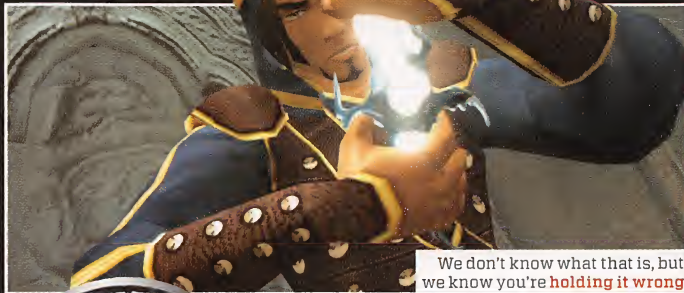
Verdict

Better than we'd anticipated.

7

Prince of Persia Trilogy

A royal gift



We don't know what that is, but we know you're **holding it wrong**



Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ADVENTURE

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT

MONTREAL

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$69.95

Like the titular Prince, here we are turning back time. The *PoP* series has influenced games more than you'd think, and this trilogy is a showcase of great game design. We can definitely see origins of *Altair* and *Ezio* in the way Prince moves.

Let's not be romantic though. These games have aged, and even though the HD sheen keeps the framerate steady and pixels sharp. Prince and other characters are very blocky. Now that we're not looking through a softer, fuzzier low-res CRT screen it's almost laughable. It's hard to pin fault on the game or the straight conversion for this, and we're happy to consider the first game in the trilogy was made in 2003.

Still, all forgivable if you let yourself be absorbed by the gameplay. The strength of all the games lies in exploring the environment and figuring out just how to make it across crumbling ledges, through winding streets and discovering

(or re-discovering) just how nimble the Prince can be.

Combat improves as the series progresses, as in the first game it's more of a distraction than an integral part of the game, as though the developers had thought they'd better put it in there. *Warrior Within* went very moody, like Prince was channeling Kratos with his mad scar and dual wielding antics.

However, *The Two Thrones* – the final part – is by far the best game overall. The tone's just right, progression is finely balanced, and it puts a bow on the narrative.

Even if you've played these games to death it's remarkably fun to go back through them, engaging that muscle memory as Prince swings, flips and clammers his way around and through the world. So while it's aged you should play this if you consider yourself a connoisseur of fine design. Newcomers, if there are any, should purchase immediately. **Paul Taylor**



"Hey buddy, knife to meet you"

Play this if you like

Assassin's Creed

Final Say

PRESENTATION It's graphically sharp, perhaps too sharp.

SOUND Dialogue's still great, and the effects will make you wince.

CONTROLS Occasional camera trickery makes you think a column's where it isn't. Still intuitive though.

REPLAY VALUE Fairly limited. You'll romp through this once, but it's fun ride.

Verdict

A rollicking trip down memory lane. Still solid.

8

This carriage is covered with filth. Loads of graffiti, too.



Rock Band 3

And this bird you cannot change

The biggest change for *Rock Band 3* is the addition of an entirely new mode: Pro Mode.

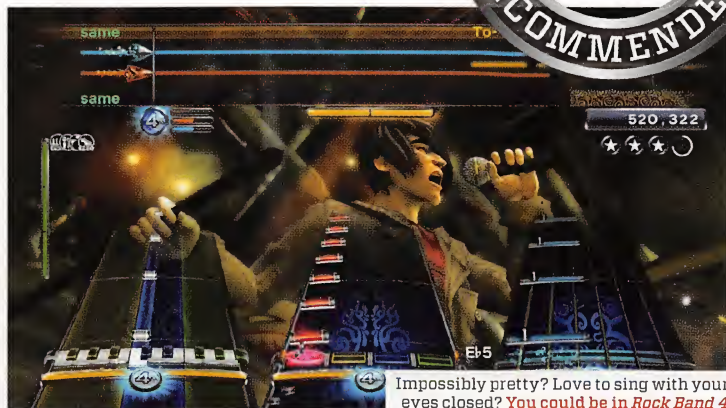
Pro Mode is essentially a tool for teaching you how to play music for real and utilises a new range of instruments for the job. Unfortunately, very few people are going to bother with it and we've detailed the intricacies of Pro Mode previously.

What regular and pro players alike will be able to enjoy, however, is the revamped career mode. We love it. Gone are the days of flicking around a big map completely designated setlists. *Rock Band 3* is all about challenges. There are dozens and dozens of them. If you have other *Rock Band* tracks on your hard drive (and you should do), the game even creates challenges from them as well.

Completing challenges either as a full band or solo earns you experience points, unlocking new outfits and new venues. The progression is a lot like in past *Rock Band* games; you'll start by catching a train to your gigs before buying a van, and eventually move up to a private jet. However, challenges can be completed in any of the modes. Your band's career is persistent across the entire game – even training.

The music, 83 tracks total, is an eclectic collection. It feels a little lacking in big-time headliners (compared to say, *Rock Band 2*) but there's plenty of good stuff. Huey Lewis and the News, Queen, Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Doors, Whitesnake and Jimi Hendrix are amongst our highlights.

It's difficult to nail down a final verdict on *Rock Band 3*, because it's a tough one to judge. If you shun the new keyboard or shy away from the new pro drums or pro guitar it really is a very similar game to *Rock Band 2*. With the Aussie dollar at parity with the US



Impossibly pretty? Love to sing with your eyes closed? You could be in *Rock Band 4*

and the asking prices of these peripherals in Australia double the price of what they're going for stateside nobody will blame you for skipping the new gear.

Similarly, if you don't have much (or any) pre-existing downloadable content or past *Rock Band* titles in your library the overall experience isn't anywhere near as robust or interesting. Our PAL copy of *Rock Band 3* was not compatible with all the NTSC DLC and exported discs (*LEGO*, *AC/DC*, *Green Day*, etc.) we've accumulated over the years so none of our 400 or so additional tracks appeared. As such the game felt like it was missing something. *Rock Band 3* has a more crowd-pleasing tracklist than *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock* but the last two years of simply excellent *Rock Band* DLC is the game's own worst enemy. *Rock Band 3* feels very much like a game built for fans that already have a swag of earlier *Rock Band* games and DLC on their hard drives.

There's nothing particularly wrong with more of the same since it was already the

best music game on the market, and since the user-interface has still improved markedly, but the value gamers glean from *Rock Band 3* will vary wildly. As a standalone game it's the best music game available, even though it arguably has the weaker soundtrack compared to *Rock Band* and *Rock Band 2*. But it feels a little hollow as a standalone game; it needs you to build a massive library to fully exploit it.

The biggest thing missing, however, from *Rock Band 3* is something we've loved about the series from the get-go – something we've consistently criticised the *Guitar Hero* series for not embracing. Gone now is the crowd singing along in the background. This is devastating; it added such great atmosphere to have masses of writhing fans chanting along in the background as you performed. It gave each song a proper 'live' feel. It still works for previous content but ditching it going forward is a huge let-down for us.

Bring it back. **Luke Reilly**

Play this if you liked

Rock Band

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: MUSIC

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER: HARMONIX

PLAYERS: 1-7

RRP: \$99.95

Final Say

PRESENTATION Like *Rock Band 2*, but sharper and sexier.

SOUND Five words: Huey Lewis and the News.

CONTROLS The same as it was, but Pro mode is a brand new bag.

REPLAY VALUE The DLC won't end. This series will give and give and give.

Verdict

The best music game available, but if you have no other *Rock Band* content on your PS3 it can't be fully appreciated.

9



The most trusted handbook for all **Aussie** iPad users!

NEW!

iPad

The essential guide

114
PAGES
OF EXPERT
ADVICE!

46 pages of
step-by-step
tutorials!



The hottest
FREE & paid
iPad apps!

Ultimate eReader

Uncover digital books,
magazines and comics

Jailbreaking!

The secrets Apple don't
want you to know!

20 of the best
iPad **TIPS**
and hidden
features!

HOW TO MAXIMISE:



Calendar | iPod | Photos | Contacts | Video | Mail
Notes | Safari | Maps | YouTube | and much more!



INTERACTIVE

Apps for
productivity
and fun!

ADVANCED

Getting in
touch with
iPad Settings

Your iPad explained!

Get the most from your iPad with
our simple hints, tricks and tweaks!

LEISURE

Fill your iPad
with music and
movies!



IPAD: THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE
AUS \$19.95 NZ \$19.95 inc GST

9 781921 641725

ON SALE NOW!

Fingerpainting: bloody fun


Play this
if you like

Afro Samurai

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTION: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: NAMCO

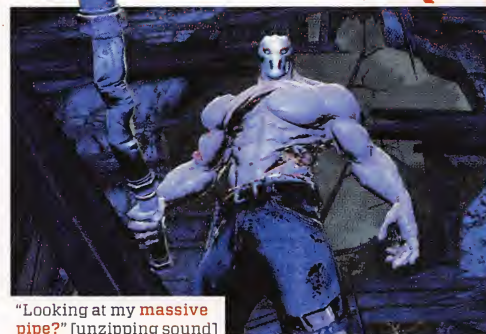
BANDAI PARTNERS

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$99.95

Splatterhouse

Brought to you by the colour red


"Looking at my massive
pipe?" [unzipping sound]

Brought to you by the same guys who put together *Afro Samurai* – the hack 'n slash game of the million-dollar anime starring Samuel L. Jackson's crude vernacular – *Splatterhouse* is a different prospect on paper but a similar one in practice.

Ostensibly a 'reboot' of a side-scrolling trilogy of horror-themed beat 'em ups released between 1988 and 1993, Namco's proposition here is more gambit than certainty. Are you old enough or retro enough to remember the *Splatterhouse* games from way back? A lot of you will answer no, some of you will say yes. The latter might also remember that, while controversial at the time, these games fell pretty short of amazing; cultish only because of their fascination with Western horror tropes and uncommon amounts of onscreen claret.

True to its 16-bit origins, *Splatterhouse* in 2010 is fantastically gory. It's fantastically gory to a fault, even. It's so gory sometimes your view of the action is obscured by just how much gore there is. The Terror Mask your man Rick wears demands blood, and the more of it you lash the floors and walls with, the quicker you'll score new killing abilities. The damage isn't just limited to ripping the mouths open and off your demonic opponents, though – take enough of a beating and chunks of your own body will go missing ala *Wolverine: Origins* until, finally, your arm drops off. Not to worry though, you can then pick it up and use it as a fleshy, makeshift club. Did we mention *Splatterhouse* is a bit gory?

Where *Afro Samurai* excelled at making simple button-mashing brutality compulsive via its creative enemy-butcher options, so too does *Splatterhouse* invite you to keep shredding those gibbering creatures from a darker place. 'Splatter Kills' are super-grisly finishing moves that border on the sickening, and getting them to work consistently in itself is a bit of an art form. However, combat can be a little sluggish and unwieldy at times, and you best be forewarned: just like the unforgiving games of yesteryear, *Splatterhouse* is hard from the get-go and doesn't give you the option of changing up the difficulty level once you're into the guts of things. On anything higher than 'Coward', the Terror Mask is going to be calling your corpse an effin' noob constantly and you're going to be seeing those lengthier-than-they-

ought-to-be loading screens more often than you'd like.

Fittingly, *Splatterhouse's* aesthetic is little bit late '80s and a little bit late '90s, like it started development a lot longer than a few years ago. From Rick's baggy nu-metal shorts to the crusty thrash riffage that occasionally paraphrases a good beat-down, it's all curiously dated in a cool kind of way – just like the license it seeks to re-imagine. While it lacks the production values and fluidity of *God of War III*, it does ultimately champion excessive carnage for excessive carnage's sake. The fact it's somehow managed to get through our censors uncathed alone makes it worth a rumble – just don't expect a miracle when its origins were so average.

👊 Toby McCasker



Splatterhouse 1, 2, and 3

Commit enough atrocities throughout *Splatterhouse's* single-player and you'll eventually unlock all three of the 16-bit originals. The very first one has aged markedly but still rocks with shocks, *Splatterhouse 2* remains an unremarkable retread of the first albeit with more grotesque elements, and *Splatterhouse 3*? Easily the best of the lot, with its forward-thinking non-linear levels, four possible endings, and the almighty Power Meter. Fill this baby with Orbs and Rick'll super-charge into Ultimate Bad-Ass Rick, a prickly fellow indeed. And by 'prickly', we mean 'argh gross his skin pointy and killing everyone.'

Final Say

PRESENTATION You've never seen so much cel-shaded gore in your young life. Possibly doesn't taste as good as it looks, though.

SOUND The grotesque splutch and crack of caved-in faces and mangled bones are actually more unnerving than satisfying. Call us sick, but we like that.

CONTROLS Could've done with a bit more grease on its axels, but button-mashing isn't exactly brain surgery. Some of the *Splatter Kills* are, though.

REPLAY VALUE Finishing the main game opens up a gruesome Survival Mode and, most interestingly, the original three games.

Verdict

Savage, but only slightly remarkable. Fun for a while.

7

This Hugo Boss shoot is about to get **literal**



James Bond 007: **Blood Stone**

No Mr. Bond, I expect you to *DIE*

Though it sounds like a horrid kidney experience, *Blood Stone* actually represents the digital salvation of the James Bond movie series (which, at the time of writing, is still on hold). The powers that be have smelled the desperate fan blood in the water, and promised to fill the void with this original videogame adventure. It's a bold promise, but their word isn't quite our Bond.

Blood Stone frequently jumps between either shooting or driving and, given Bizarre Creations familiarity with racers (see: *Blur*), it's a wonder why the vehicle sections aren't the better diversion. These levels linger on way too long, never quite capture the adrenaline of the moment and fail to

properly telegraph some of the frustrating insta-crash pitfalls which makes the tail-happy handling physics seem even worse.

Fortunately the over-arching plot and the gunplay proves to be a tad more exciting. Penned by noteworthy Bond writer, Bruce Feirstein, this original 007 story has James third-person shooting and busting heads in some great set-piece battles designed to scratch the twitch-crowd's itch. Curiously, if you're within striking range you can do a fist-to-groin takedown that will magically imbue you with the ability to one-shot execute another enemy. This mechanic makes any single-player firefight way too easy; which initially makes you feel like Bond, but towards the end it just makes things a pushover.

When it comes time to go online for multiplayer, *Blood Stone* allows up to 16 players to go hammer and tongs on one another as either MI6 agents or mercenaries in conspicuous red shirts (which, if *Star Trek* rules apply, makes them the worse choice).

Like the single-player firefights, the gunplay here feels fairly vanilla – but there is a cool incentive to be first on your team, as the points leader morphs into Bond.

That one shining moment of radness is dwarfed by the shoddy insta-kill melee tactic; since when is a barely-connected elbow more effective than a few rounds from a .50 cal? Given how powerful this technique is, the match mode called 'last man standing' can feasibly be renamed to 'pussies galore', as most players will forgo a straight up fight for just camp-hiding and some sprint 'n' thwack tactics.

Multiplayer is pretty limited in variety, all team-based, and with a fistful of maps. Couple this annoyance with the fact that the rest of the game doesn't attempt to raise the bar in any way – and only lasts a paltry five hours – and *Blood Stone* starts to feel like a very pedestrian shooter. Honestly, we doubt even Xenia Onatopp on herbal Viagra could squeeze thrills out of this short ride. **Adam Mathew**

Play this if you like

Bourne Conspiracy

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR:

ACTIVISION

DEVELOPER: BIZARRE

CREATIONS

PLAYERS: 1-16

RRP: \$99.95

Final Say

PRESENTATION Not the prettiest Bond girl out there, only adequate. Iffy multiplayer animations.

SOUND Anaemic gun sfx and Craig sounds disinterested at times. Joss Stone goes alright as a Bond girl.

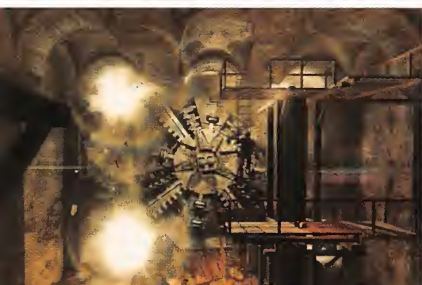
CONTROLS Bond's lethal on legs, but road kill when on wheels. Not much evolution here.

REPLAY VALUE The multi is playable, but it won't set anybody's hair on fire

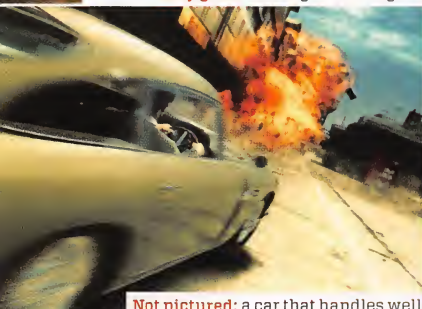
Verdict

Fun, but paint-by-numbers action that is way too short.

6



Just the **daily grind** of being a secret agent



Not pictured: a car that handles well



This one's shorter than **Lazenby's** career

God of War Ghost of Sparta

Phwoooar never changes



**Play this
if you like**

God of War: Chains of Olympus

Info

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$49.95

Fans of the original *God of War* (read: everyone who owned a PS2 and drew breath), might remember an interesting special features extra that hinted at a very different sequel to what we saw in *God of War II*.

The unlockable cinematic detailed the plight of Kratos' brother; a sickly specimen who failed the Spartan's harsh Darwinian day care centre, died and had to grow up in Hades. *Ghost of Sparta* manages to weave that loose end into being a standout addition to a series already sporting a rich tapestry of tales.

This insanely good interquel incorporates a worthy addition to the combat, in the form of a flame gauge that sits underneath the standard health and magic bars. Once you set off this great balls of fire ability, Kratos' blades deal more damage and even create time-delayed explosions once you level up.

This phenomenon recharges after a short cool-down period, which makes immolating idiots a permanent, addictive part of the spartan's skill set. Other improvements, such as a spear and shield combo and the tackle tactic from *God of War III* help keep the hack 'n' slash fresh.

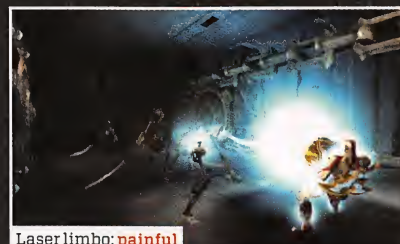
The gameplay is tighter than the bold one's eight-pack abs, but the most amazing facet of *Ghost of Sparta* is the visuals. Frankly, we had no idea the seven year old PSP had any power left



Kratos loves Johnny Cash. That's why he has a **ring of fire**

in it to impress us; but we stand corrected and gobsmacked.

Chains of Olympus was a pretty title, but even it stands as nothing compared to this graphical juggernaut. While there's no denying that the scenes depicted within can't compare with the exercise in colossal that was *God of War III*, the amazingly high fidelity of the graphics are guaranteed knock your sandals off in other ways. Don't let the seemingly diminutive size of the PSP fool you, this is one of the best games in the GOW series. **Adam Mathew**



Laser limbo: **painful**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Hands down some of the best visuals on the handheld.

SOUND Vicious splats and the standard rage bellows of Kratos.

CONTROLS Rolling on the shoulder button still feels meh, otherwise tight.

REPLAY VALUE There is a tonne of GOW lore to unlock here.

Verdict

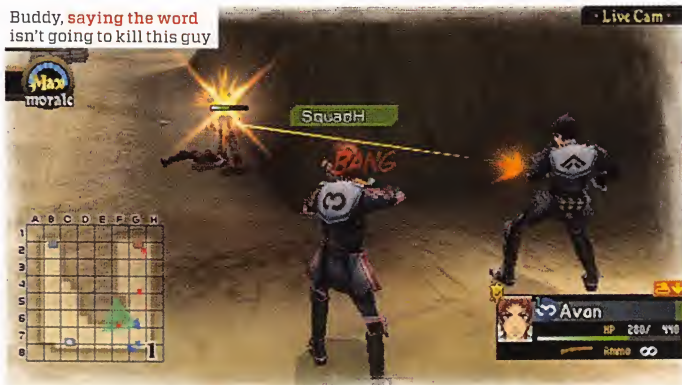
Hyper-violent and highly-polished, this is a must own for PSP players. It's a series that just keeps on dishing out big hits.

9

Valkyria Chronicles II

Now with added action in your tactics

Buddy, **saying the word** isn't going to kill this guy



**Play this
if you like**

Valkyria Chronicles

Info

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: RPG
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SEGA
PLAYERS: 1-4
RRP: \$69.95

The *Valkyria Chronicles* series is as much about story as it is about gameplay. A bunch of high-school aged teenagers are caught up in a war, and they're being taught the skills needed to defend their country at the Lanseal Military Academy.

The theme of friendship and family runs through this, and in between stages you have various story arcs to go through, as main character Avan tries to wrangle his rag-tag bunch of surly, shy and snobby classmates.

On the battlefield it shares a lot in common with the original *Chronicles*, so it's automatically brilliant. There's a mixture of real-time movement and turn-based group warfare, but with a deeper system of offensive weaponry and tactics. The class system has been tweaked that shunts

snipers into a subset of Scouts, and in its place is a heavy hitting melee expert. This unit's impervious to small arms fire, and acts as a handy shield for other team members.

Each of the classes has multiple specialties with their own advantages and drawbacks. Shocktroopers get bigger machine guns at cost to health, for example. But, to unlock these classes you need to earn special rewards within missions, and it's character specific. So, if you want a bad-arse team maxxed up to the hilt, you're going to have to stick with the same bunch of people throughout your campaign and mix up your strategy. Again, unlocking the better weapons means earning the right materials and taking down powerful enemies for the better plans.

Problems? It doesn't really get going until five hours in, and the difficulty spike will have you in tears. Still, this is a great PSP title.

Paul Taylor



And that's how a burger can **cost you your job**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Quirky cut scenes but very clear and crisp battle sequences.

SOUND The screams of fallen soldiers is piercing, though their battle cries are fairly rousing.

CONTROLS Fiddly at first due to a missing second thumbstick, but intuitive after a while.

REPLAY VALUE Near endless. There's a bunch of DLC out already.

Verdict

Demanding. You'll love it and curse it at the same time. Much better with friends.

8



FREE to join
to play

SPARTANSSTANDTALL.COM

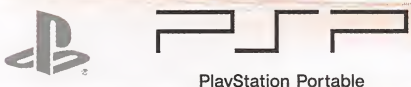
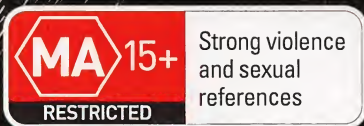
PlayStation, PSP, and "AOX" are trademarks or registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "SONY" is a registered trademark of Sony Corporation. All titles, content, publisher, game, trademark, artwork, and associated imagery are trademarks and/or copyrighted material of their respective owners. PlayStation Network account required. PlayStation Network and PlayStation Store subject to terms of use and availability. PlayStation Network and PlayStation Store are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Published by Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. © 2010 Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Published by Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Developed by Ready At Dawn Studios. "God of War" is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. PSP-46000



YOUR MYSTERIES. YOUR BATTLES. YOUR SALVATION
YOUR WHOLE WORLD IN YOUR HANDS

DISCOVER THE DARK BACKSTORY OF SPARTAN WARRIOR KRATOS, WAGE WAR
ON THE GODS AND MONSTERS OF ANCIENT GREECE AND TRAVEL TO
MYTHICAL LANDS ON AN EPIC ONE-MAN QUEST FOR REDEMPTION.

IN STORES NOVEMBER 4TH.



PlayStation Portable



SONY
make.believe

WHAT'S NEW

PSN DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

Did you or your old man ever dump a week's worth of pocket money on pinball and comics? No?! You've never lived. Marvel Comics has a history lesson for you – and a trip for those who misspent their youth – as they're set to release Marvel Pinball.

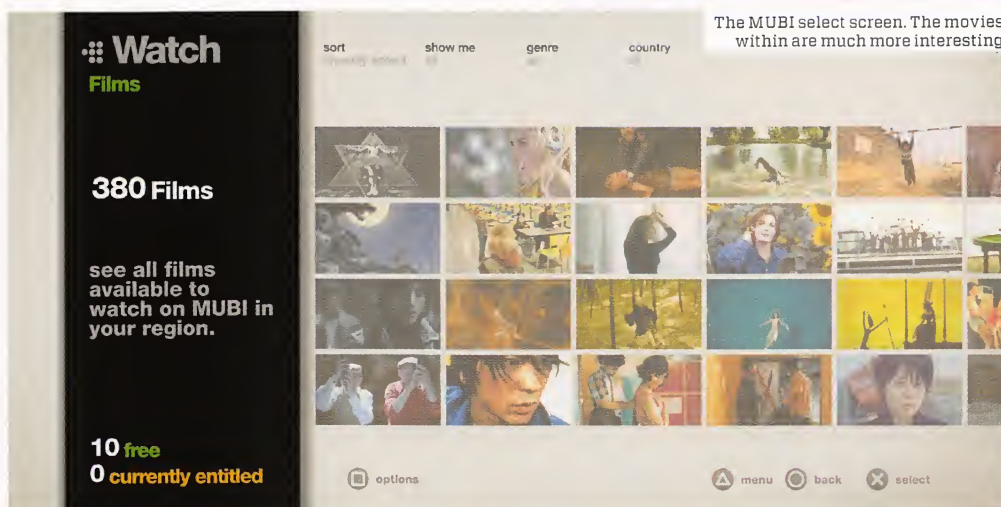
This amalgamation brings Spiderman, Iron Man, Wolverine and Blade to the table – literally – and each is tailored to that specific heroes life within the comics. Spiderman's table is scattered with his various enemies who will each bring a new challenge with them, from The Green Goblin transforming the ball into pumpkin bombs to Dr. Octopus assaulting the table with his tentacle, picking up and placing the balls around the table. Marvel Pinball is set to hit the PSN shelves before the end of 2010.

The MUBI online cinema tool is available to download. You can buy an 'all you can watch' unlimited monthly subscription for \$19.95, while an individual film will cost between \$1.75 and \$6.25, depending on the length of the film, each with a seven day 'rental' period.

Other key features that have been updated are the real-time Facebook and



We be ballin'



The MUBI select screen. The movies within are much more interesting

PSN updates keeping you in the know with what your friends have been watching and what their favourites and ratings are. There are also a bunch of free movies in the library, so we suggest you start digging and let us know what you're watched.

Top down shooters never say die, and they die even less with the release of *Zombie Nation*. Made by the same developers of *Super Stardust HD*, Housemarque, this should be one of the prettiest and most hectic games out on PSN. The team are promising a massive ratio of zombies to pixels, and there will be an inter-country table to show off who has the biggest high score.

Finally, PSN Plus subscribers can expect the following during December. It's not the final list, so be sure to check online.

- PSN: *Cuboid*
- minis: *Bubble Trubble*, *Dracula: Undead Awakening*
- PSOne Classic: *Oddworld: Abe's Exodus*
- Exclusive discounts: *Punisher No Mercy*, *Greed Corp* (both 50 percent off)
- Dynamic themes: Exclusive Winter Theme
- Exclusive Lava Lamp Theme
- Premium avatars: *Hustle Kings Avatars* – Available for two weeks only from 8th Dec; *Dead Nation Avatars* – Available for two weeks only

VIDZONE CHANNEL SPOTLIGHT

THIS MONTH: All-time Classics



QUEEN - RADIO GAGA

There are more Queen songs in the mix, but *that* chorus just gets stuck in our heads. We're clapping right now.



DJ JAZZY JEFF - SUMMERTIME

The Fresh Prince stars in this as well, when Will Smith was rocking his Bel Air hair do. That thing was dense.



GROOVE ARMADA - GET DOWN

A narrative, kind of, where it's a 'making of' the video, but with giant white rabbits. Good party tune, too.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available **free** on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13,000 music videos at the push of a button!



PlayStation®Network

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS

GRANDIA PSONE



A classic RPG rivaling the mighty *Final Fantasy* series, but with a hero with an unassuming name: Justin. Legendary stuff.

CASTLE CRASHERS



Best played with mates, this side-scrolling hack and slasher has a tonne of charm and cartoon gore. Super charming.

GOD OF WAR COLLECTION



You can buy this slice of history as a whole, or split it up into two very more-ish pieces. 9GB a piece, though, so get it off-peak.

ROCK BAND 3 BON JOVI GREATEST HITS



A dozen Bon Jovi tracks for the latest in the series, including the instantly recognisable *Bad Medicine*.

DEAD RISING 2 SKILLS PACK - NINJA



Chuck gets a brand new costume to make him slippery, a bunch of new swords and even improvised throwing stars.

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



PlayStation®Network



Pictured: Webber not winning

GENRE: RACING **RELEASE:** NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS **PLAYERS:** 1-12 **RRP:** \$109.95

Multiplayer > F1 2010

It's go, woah, go!

F1 2010 multiplayer offers four game modes. Sprint is three laps in dry conditions, and the chances of finding players for one of the other modes are about the same as a rhino falling from the sky since they require masses of time. If you're going to play *F1 2010* online, you better either like short frantic races, or staring at a lobby screen for two hours.

Opening 'Quick Match' drops you in a said lobby. Initially it takes a while to find an opponent, but after a duel or two there'll be more racers ready.

By the fifth Sprint, you should have a starting grid of five-plus. There are long waits between events, but lag is rare, and we had a flawless connection during actual racing.

What's frustrating though is being disqualified, and it happens often due to forbidden areas on certain tracks you can accidentally turn into. You must then either wait for every other player to finish, or 'Quit' – which forces you to create a whole new lobby and find new opponents from scratch. And there's no option to insert A.I. into multiplayer races. Bummer.

VERDICT

Perfect for short blasts, which kinda defeats the purpose of being an indepth sim. There's a lot of life in it though.

GENRE: RACING **RELEASE:** NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** AFA INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: BLACK BEAN **PLAYERS:** 1-16 **RRP:** \$99.95

Multiplayer > WRC

Caution, ghosts ahead

Like the single player portion of *WRC*, multiplayer offers very little frills. The sport is really about you beating the clock and conditions, making sure you and your 300hp beast are going to cross the finish line in one piece.

Modes are what you expect them to be in a game focussed on simulation. Single stage, single rally and championship, and within that there are options for how your stages are going to be chosen – whether it's by the host, a vote or random. 'Random' in a championship is very much that, as you'll be zig-zagging all over the world, and you might find you visit some countries more than others.

Everyone starts at the same time and your opponents are represented by some fairly plain ghost cars. Graphical fidelity wasn't the game's strong point, and this is highlighted here. Even though they're unconvincing it's pretty helpful and often hilarious to see everyone ahead of you crashing at the same corner.

Championships can be a slog, but persevere and you'll quickly rank up. It doesn't look like there are that many people playing, so jump on now.

VERDICT

Hardly essential, you should get on this now because *Hot Pursuit* is bound to hog the online racing space.



"What's your dad gonna say?"



PlayStation®Network

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

DEVELOPER: TREYARCH
PLAYERS: 1-16
Take *MW2*, and add in some insanely addictive contracts and inventive modes in the multiplayer proper. However, we especially like playing *Zombies* with a skilled compatriot.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO **PLAYERS:** 1-16
The connection issues that bothered us are well and truly fixed, so there's no excuse not to jump on, form a posse and start hunting for challengers. Much better as a co-op experience.



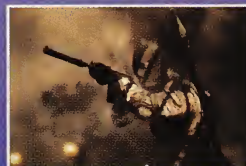
SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-4
It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a bunch of lads and lasses hanging around, marvelling at your quarter-circle technique. Champagne gaming.



FIFA 11

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS
PLAYERS: 1-22
Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. It's still as compelling and smooth as last year's effort. Get on it right now.



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

DEVELOPER: DICE
PLAYERS: 1-16
You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves.



Cue Yakety Sax

GENRE: ACTION **RELEASE:** NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** ROCKSTAR **DEVELOPER:** ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO **PLAYERS:** 1-16 **RRP:** \$15.95

DLC > Red Dead Redemption

Undead Nightmare

Better red than undead

This is DLC done right. For just over the price of a six pack you can have one of the best gaming experiences of the year. All you need is to already own a copy of *Red Dead Redemption*, one of the best games of this generation.

Undead Nightmare is a standalone, non-canon add-on to Rockstar's majestic Western. Using the world and characters they've already created the crew at Rockstar San Diego has crafted a tongue-in-cheek love letter to B-movie horror films. It's campy, grindhouse fare – entirely at odds with the serious opus that was the main game – but that's what makes it so much fun.

This is high end stuff. It's above and beyond just plonking some zombies into the landscape, tossing you a shotgun and saying, "Aim for the head." Rockstar San Diego has built all new cutscenes with voiceover work from the original actors. There's an awesome all-new soundtrack. The world has been filled to bursting with brand new undead models of everything, from townsfolk to wildlife.

When the dead start rising from their graves John Marston suddenly finds himself fighting for his life in a world gone to hell. While the game has received a creepy makeover the missions are in the same as in the main game, just slightly altered. Instead of hunting for fugitives you'll search for lost family members. Instead of clearing out gang hideouts you'll be liquidating graveyards. There are new challenge ranks to unlock (and new animals to hunt,

including mythical ones we won't spoil here). There are towns to liberate from the undead hordes (which you'll need to do before being able to save or fast-travel in said town). There are the Four Horses of the Apocalypse to find and break. There are more side-missions and, of course, a main storyline full of familiar faces and fanciful theories of how the dead came back to life.

The action is more straightforward (and easier) than the main game because the undead don't shoot back. All you need to do is bean them in the bonce and they'll go down for good. They can't climb either, so get up high and you'll be apples. *Undead Nightmare* comes with a few new weapons, including Holy Water, a torch and a blunderbuss (which shoots zombie parts) but just shooting them in the head will suffice. Ammo is at a premium, however, so shoot smart. There's no cash in the economy any more, just bullets.

The six-plus hour single-player portion isn't all you get either. There are two new multiplayer modes included as well. The first, Undead Overrun, has you and some friends teaming up against wave after wave of zombies until you're overwhelmed. The second mode is found in Free Roam and actually has nothing to do with the undead at all. Called Land Grab you'll need to secure seven different locations throughout the map. It's available for anyone to play but only those with *Undead Nightmare* can initiate a match.

Undead Nightmare is brilliant; it's

"*Undead Nightmare* is brilliant. It's actually worth so much **more than its asking price"**

actually worth so much more than its asking price. Make sure you've completed the main game before you play it so you can appreciate the excellent ending.

What it's done, though, is make us crave an 'Undead Nightmare' mode for GTA as well. Picture Liberty City as a barren wasteland, filled with smoking wrecks and piles of debris everywhere. Imagine a metropolis the size of Liberty City eerily empty and silent one moment and filled with shrieking zombies the next.

We're aware they already made a movie out of this with Will Smith in it. Our idea is still better.

VERDICT

An expansion that adds value to the main game, whilst being a game in itself. A must-own.



Yep, still thinking of Yakety Sax

VIDEO MUSIC ON PS3



► TOP 7 TIPS TO RULE THE MOJAVE IN

Fallout: New Vegas

After some of the *OPs* crew have sunk in around 80 hours on the irradiated Sunset Strip, we figure we've pretty much got the lowdown on just about everything there is to do as you traverse the Mojave. Follow our breadcrumb trail and you'll get just a little more juice out of this ridiculously deep and distracting experience.



Be excellent to each other

If you play the bad guy, you're seriously limiting your options. Try to get on everyone's best side. You never know when a faction might come in handy. By doing side missions you level up, garner shop discounts, have serious allies necessary for the later stages and you don't have to throw down with every Tom, Dick and Harry you meet out in the Wastelands.



Nap Time

They say that eight hours a night rack-time will keep you clear headed and prosperous. *New Vegas* supports this train of thought. If you sleep in any bed you own (through completing various quests), you'll gain an extra 10 per cent XP "Well Rested" bonus for the next few hours (in game time). When you're trying to reach that elusive Level 30, every little bit extra counts, so make sure you rest your head so you can really rule the town.



Oo-rah!

Companions have their own unique attributes, strengths and weaknesses. However, Boone outshines them all. Situated in the armpit of a town Novac, you'll find him sniping out the mouth of the fabled T-Rex. If you solve the mystery of his disappearing wife, you'll be able to recruit him. With his Spotter perk outlining all enemies in red as you aim and overpowered rifle, he'll do a lot of the hard work for you!



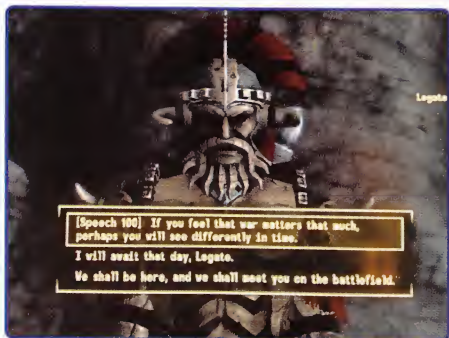
Double Down

You know you can double up companions, right? Not with a human, that's a no no. There is a loophole in the system. You can get Rex, The King's hound dog in Freeside who'll sniff out ammo and weapons or ED-E from Primm with his robotic scanner giving you an early warning when enemies approach. We've found Boone and ED-E a potent and absolutely deadly combination. Now that's a good doggy.



Get Steel

If you keep your options open and play the saviour to many factions you'll probably stumble across the hidden Brotherhood of the Steel. It is in your best interests to befriend these guys as their arsenal makes them a force to be reckoned with. If they initiate you into the Brotherhood, you'll be able to wear and use Power Armour and get access to their kick-arse weaponry, including the debilitating Gauss Rifle.



Talk the Talk

One of the best features of *New Vegas* is you can pick and choose how you want to play the game, but there are a few skills we recommend. Barter, Repair, Science and Lockpick are all handy, but you'll get the most rewarding journey if you max out Speech. It gives you many more choices. You can lie, bluff and usually turn anyone around to your way of thinking and often diffuse impossible unresolvable situations.



Get yer own freakin' Satellite

When you get to Helios Power Plant, you'll get a mission from a Christian Slater inspired douchebag named Fantastic. It involves the distribution of power to Mojave and a wee little bonus. You'll get access to the Archimedes II satellite with a monstrous orbital laser. Use it for good or it to "pacify" surrounding NCR patrols (mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha) and then keep it for yourself!





The iPhone's top apps – reviewed!

FREE! \$20
iPhone 4
COVER WORTH

The essential guide to iPhone

• 4
• 3G
• 3GS



iPhone



iPod



iTunes



Apps

iPhone 4

Why you won't be able to do without it

Killer software

Game Center, HDR photos, and video streaming in detail

Video calling with FaceTime

Apple's new app will change the way you communicate

PLUS!

Jailbreaking

The secrets Apple don't want you to know!

Must-have accessories | Email explained | iBooks app | New Apple TV



ON SALE NOW!

▶ MUST WATCH

The Expendables

DIRECTOR: SYLVESTER STALLONE
CAST: SYLVESTER STALLONE, JASON STATHAM, JET LI, TERRY CREWS, RANDY COUTURE, DOLPH LUNDGREN, STEVE AUSTIN, MICKEY ROURKE, BRUCE WILLIS **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

You're not here for Shakespeare, but we'll tell you the plot anyway. *The Expendables* is a hard-hitting action/thriller about a group of mercenaries hired to infiltrate a South American country and overthrow its ruthless dictator. Originality isn't its drawcard, you'll seek it out because it features a phenomenal all-star line up of Hollywood heavyweights and action kings. Not to mention it has more bullets, knives and gratuitous explosions than the entire decade that was the '80s.

This is basically a B-movie with a AAA movie budget. Commando roll into it with that knowledge and you'll have a blast. The orange mocha frappuccino crowd will not understand or appreciate this. Everyone else will.

Watch this if you like watching people who don't watch explosions (they just walk away).

Verdict Enlist in this and you'll soon be saluting a guilty pleasure from yesteryear. Truly the best action movie to come along in years. Duke Nukem would be proud.

8



Berets: only a select few can pull them off.

"The orange mocha frappuccino crowd will not understand or appreciate this"



Inception

DIRECTOR CHRISTOPHER NOLAN **CAST** LEONARDO DICAPRIO, KEN WATANABE, JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT
AVAILABLE (RENT) \$4.99, 4518MB (HD) \$3.99 1277MB (SD)

Dom Cobb (DiCaprio) is a skilled thief, the absolute best in the dangerous art of extraction: stealing valuable secrets from deep within a person's subconscious as they dream. His rare ability has made him a coveted asset in the new world of corporate espionage, but it has also made him an international fugitive and cost him everything he has ever loved. Now Cobb is being offered a chance at redemption. One last job could give him his life back but only if he can accomplish the impossible; inception.

Not since *The Matrix* have we seen this much imagination and intelligence in one film. Watch it.

Watch this if you like *The Matrix*, *The Dark Knight*

Verdict This is a modern classic that deserves to be seen. Multiple watches make it better.

10

PlayStation®Store

▶ TOP TEN

Movies on Demand



- 1 **Get Him to the Greek** Universal
- 2 **Superman/Batman Apocalypse** Warner Bros.
- 3 **Robin Hood** Universal
- 4 **Repo Men** Universal
- 5 **The Losers** Warner Bros.
- 6 **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo** Roadshow
- 7 **Hot Tub Time Machine** Fox
- 8 **A Nightmare on Elm Street (2010)** Warner Bros.
- 9 **She's Out of My League** Paramount
- 10 **The Book of Eli** Sony

Source: au.playstation.com

Now available to rent or own on PlayStation®Store

The PlayStation Network Video Store offers hundreds of titles available to rent or own at the click of a button!



Aliens Anthology (MA15+)

DIRECTORS: RIDLEY SCOTT, JAMES CAMERON, DAVID FINCHER, JEAN-PIERRE JEUNET **CAST:** SIGOURNEY WEAVER, MICHAEL BIEHN, LANCE HENRIKSEN, RON PERLMAN, WINONA RYDER **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY

How many times can a studio re-release boxsets of classic franchises? As many times as it likes if they're all as awesome as this *Alien* boxset.

The special features alone are a collector's dream, with all the stuff from previous releases, as well as some brand new interviews – including one less-than-flattering one with the people who made *Alien 3* – along with a truly remarkable interactive system that bookmarks all the info-bites you want to know about.

The movies themselves hold up well, and the transfer and beautification to Blu-ray is excellent. You'll swear that *Aliens* was made yesterday when you see it in full HD. This is an immediate must-buy.

Watch this if you like anything by James Cameron

Verdict Incredible. The amount of special features will have you going 'til 2012.

10



Tomorrow When The War Began (M)

DIRECTOR: STUART BEATTIE **CAST:** RACHEL HURD-WOOD, PHOEBE TONKIN, LINCOLN LEWIS, CAITLIN STASEY **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY

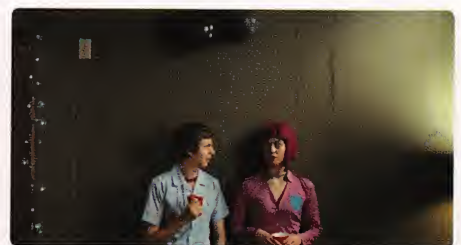
This is fantastic Aussie cinema based on one of the most beloved young adult novels ever written and published down under. When their country is invaded and their families are taken, eight unlikely high school teenagers band together to fight a guerilla war in their country hometown of Wirrawee. The teens devise a daring plan to disrupt the invaders' supply lines by blowing up a major bridge.

Action-packed and thrilling, *Tomorrow When The War Began* represents one of the greatest action blockbusters to emerge from Australia – it needed John Marsden's nod for it to go ahead. Fans of the novel will approve.

Watch this if you liked *Red Dawn*

Verdict The teen drama has taken a backseat to action and explosions. We're cool with that.

9



Scott Pilgrim vs. The World (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: EDGAR WRIGHT **CAST:** MICHAEL CERA, MARY ELIZABETH WINSTEAD, CHRIS EVANS **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

In this epic epic of epicness 23 year old Scott has the ultimate life. He's in a rock band, "between jobs", and dating a cute high school girl. All that changes when he decides to trade it all for a chance to be next to a roller-blading hottie named Ramona Flowers. But between Scott and Ms. Flowers are her seven evil exes (think: videogame boss fights and you're on the right track).

Its dialogue may not be as wow-worthy as its eye-popping visuals, but *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* is still speedy, slick and inventive. It's packed with nods to videogames too, so you're bound to get a kick out of the gags if nothing else. This is must-watch material for ardent lovers of geek culture.

Watch this if you like videogames and/or comics

Verdict Its the typical rom-com formula but overdosed on pop culture references. Check it out.

9



The Killer Inside Me (MA15+)

PRODUCERS: MICHAEL WINTERBOTTOM **CAST:** CASEY AFFLECK, JESSICA ALBA AND KATE HUDSON **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

In an unassuming West Texas town sheriff's deputy Lou Ford (Affleck) is a quiet charmer who has a simple life and a pretty girl (Hudson) to come home to. But after a chance encounter with a gorgeous prostitute (Alba) on the edge of town, Ford's own dark past and violent urges bubble to the surface.

The *Killer Inside Me* is stylish and beautifully shot, but Michael Winterbottom's distance from his characters robs the novel source material of some vital characterisation. That said, this is a brutally violent film that is pitch-perfect dark noir that features Casey Affleck delivering one of the best performances of his career as the chilling, vile sociopathic deputy sheriff.

Watch this if you like *American Psycho* or Jessica Alba in lingerie and a cowboy hat

Verdict A surprisingly violent and nasty adaptation of Thompson's 1952 novel.

7



The Girl Who Played With Fire (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: DANIEL ALFREDSON **CAST:** MICHAEL NYQVIST, NOOMI RAPACE **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY

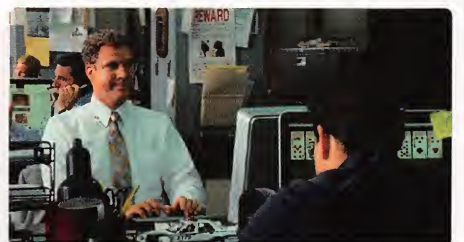
As computer hacker Lisbeth (Rapace) and journalist Mikael (Nyqvist) investigate a sex-trafficking ring, Lisbeth is framed for three murders. When she decides to turn fugitive, Mikael works desperately to clear her name.

Fans of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* will gobble up this gripping sequel. While Rapace and Nyqvist remain extraordinarily well-suited to their roles, this second installment in Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy doesn't pack quite as much punch as the first. This still tells a terrific story, but all told it feels much more superficial and a lot less engaging this time around.

Watch this if you liked *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*

Verdict As a thriller this looks slicker than the last film. Unfortunately it's just not as deep.

7



The Other Guys (M)

DIRECTOR: ADAM MCKAY **CAST:** WILL FERRELL, MARK WAHLBERG, EVA MENDES **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

Two mismatched, bookish detectives, Gamble (Will Ferrell) and Hoitz (Mark Wahlberg), seize an opportunity to step up and emulate the top cops whom they idolise – only things don't quite go as planned.

The first problem is that they're trying to imitate the likes of super-detectives Danson (Dwayne Johnson) and Highsmith (Samuel L. Jackson). The second issue is that Gamble is a forensic accountant who's usually chained to a desk, and Hoitz has been shunned by society since he shot an MLB star.

This police parody takes several well-aimed swipes at the action genre, blending knockabout farce with quick-witted humour – Ferrell's on form, but Wahlberg's an excellent straight man. That said, if you hated *Anchorman's* surrealism, this isn't your flick.

Watch this if you liked either *Starsky & Hutch* or *Anchorman*

Verdict Not the best collaboration between Will Ferrell and Adam McKay but worth a look.

7

▶ MUST WATCH

Monsters (M)

DIRECTOR: GARETH EVANS **CAST:** WHITNEY ABLE, KEVON KANE, SCOOT MCNAIRY **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

Monsters is a tease. The synopsis makes it sound like the next big monster movie, as a U.S. space probe crashes in Mexico, releasing extra-terrestrial beings that like to munch on people. Classic alien sci-fi fare, then?

Not quite. *Monsters* is more about people than about the aliens, and it's also a dig at American politics and illegal immigration. Since the U.S. government doesn't want its citizens being turned into UFO parfait, they're locking down the border between themselves and those across the border, determined to keep the aliens out with a massive wall.

But there's two Yanks stuck in the infected zone. Andrew Kaulder (McNairy) is a photojournalist, and Sam Wynden (Able) is a tourist, who's also the daughter of Kaulder's boss. Kaulder's put in charge of looking after Wynden, and as the two of them pick their way north their relationship develops. The monsters themselves are more felt than seen, and this lives on the threat of something that may happen.

So, yeah, less about monsters and more about romance. The film barely recognises the plight of the people walled in near the infected area, and the ends up being fairly flat and predictable. Wynden and Kaulder are recognisable characters, and the film as whole doesn't fully engage.

Many of the actors are amateurs, ad-libbing, and it's shot in a handheld fashion that reminds us of *Cloverfield* but without the massive budget. It was shot on the sound of two dollars rubbing against one another in South America, so while the locations are authentic and the intent clear, its plot and dialogue feels weak.

Recommendation? Wait til it hits Blu-ray. Else, just crack open *District 9* for a real monster mash.

Watch this if you like *Cloverfield*, *District 9*



"A U.S. space probe crashes in Mexico, releasing extra-terrestrial beings that like to munch on people"

"OK, if I'm in Zona Infectada, then.... oh, sh-"



"Ok Dundee, I just dare you to say it..."

Machete (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: ROBERT RODRIGUEZ, ETHAN MANIQUIS **CAST:** DANNY TREJO, ROBERT DE NIRO, STEVEN SEGAL, MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ

Last seen on our screens as the guy who taught you how to fight in *The Fight*, Trejo's back to doing what he's best at (and looks least silly in).

Trejo is a cop, Machete, in both name and weapon of choice, and he falls foul of a Mexican drug lord (Segal). After witnessing the death of his wife, Machete's on a one-way road to revenge. He loses his job and winds up in Texas as an illegal immigrant.

He's then tasked with assassinating a corrupt

politician (De Niro), who is running a campaign against illegal immigrants. Machete's not a man who's going to solve his problems with an angry letter, and over the course of the film buckets of the red stuff flow across the screen. Entrails are used in a way you'd never thought possible.

It's all very silly, and there's a message of immigration that's trying to get through (when it's not wiping blood from its eyes) but you're in this for the over-the-top antics. You've got to be in the mood for its brand of fun, so be warned.



A man, seeing another man, about a dog

Due Date (M)

DIRECTOR: TODD PHILLIPS **CAST:** ROBERT DOWNEY JR., ZACH GALIFIANAKIS

Zach Galifianakis is the new Seann William Scott. Scott was in the *American Pie* movies, *Road Trip* (also directed by Todd Phillips), and *Role Models* but he's always Stifler from *American Pie*. Galifianakis is always going to be that guy from *The Hangover* (which is, uh, also directed by Phillips). Maybe it's the beard. He's in full *Hangover* mode here, so fans will appreciate the gimmick.

Anyway, the film's pedigree's right. Uptight Peter (Downey) is on his way home to Los Angeles from Atlanta for the impending birth of his child. He's on his way through airport security and runs in to clueless Ethan (Galifianakis). After a series of mishaps the two of them end up being booted from their flight and on the no-fly list.

Peter can't rent a car, but Ethan can. Hence, road trip.

The jokes and the actors carry it, rather than the plot or inventiveness. If you like Downey, Galifianakis or Phillips' work then you'll dig *Due Date*. It's no classic, but it'll do until we see a sequel to *The Hangover*.

L E O N A R D O D I C A P R I O
 KEN JOSEPH MARION ELLEN TOM CILLIAN TOM MICHAEL
 WATANABE GORDON-LEVITT COTILLARD PAGE HARDY MURPHY BERENGER AND CAINE

A FILM BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

INCEPTION

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE DARK KNIGHT™



WIN!
 ONE OF 20
 INCEPTION PRIZE
 PACKS, VALUED AT
 \$145rrp each

iphone not included

Warner Home Video/OPS promotion

Win one of twenty *Inception* prize packs, valued at \$145rrp each!

Christopher Nolan directs this sci-fi actioner that operates in the world of dreams. Dom Cobb's (Leonardo DiCaprio) skill at stealing the subconscious secrets has made him a player in industrial espionage... and a fugitive. Now, if he can succeed at inception, planting an idea rather than stealing one, Cobb and his team could pull off the perfect crime.

Directed by *The Dark Knight's* Christopher Nolan, *Inception* is one thrilling ride that will challenge your preconception of what reality really is. Available on the PlayStation® Store, as well as 4-Disc Combo Pack from December 8, this is your chance to win one of 20 prize packs, all thanks to Warner Home Video. All you have to do is answer the following question in 25 words or less, and follow the entry instructions below.

Question: In *Inception*, Dom Cobb has to enter a dream within a dream to be able to steal an idea. We want to know what is your ultimate dream within a dream?

How to Enter

To enter Official PlayStation® Magazine competitions email your entries to ops@citrusmedia.com.au with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted!). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to OPS competitions PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW, 2002. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 11/1/2011. Winners will be notified by mail.



BATMAN and all related characters and elements are trademarks of and © DC Comics.
 © 2010 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.

index

ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparative quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

ACTION

50 Cent: Blood on the Sand 7
SWORDFISH STUDIOS
So dumb it's dangerously good. Better than it sounds.

Army of Two 7
EA MONTREAL
Solid co-op thrills make up for its wasted potential.

Army of Two: The 40th Day 7
EA MONTREAL
Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the first.

Avatar 7
UBISOFT MONTREAL
If you've got a 3D TV, buy it. If not, it's too derivative to bother.

RECOMMENDED Bayonetta 9
PLATINUM GAMES
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

Bionic Commando 7
GRIN
There are some great moments, but they're few and far between.

The Bourne Conspiracy 7
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
Great presentation and vibe, samey action. Stylish, superficial.

The Club 8
BIZARRE CREATIONS
Original, compulsive and fun.

Damnation 3
BLUE OMEGA ENTERTAINMENT
Uninspired level design, broken gameplay.

Dark Sector 7
DIGITAL EXTREMES
Solid but hardly perfect.

Dark Void 6
AIRTIGHT GAMES
Uninspiring graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.



DEAD RISING 2 9
DEVELOPER: BLUE CASTLE GAMES
PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-4
"You'll wear a stupid grin pretty much from start to finish and it's a riot in co-op. A must-play. The satisfaction of literally cutting down thousands of zombies with anything you can pick up is its only hook - but it works a treat."

Dead to Rights: Retribution 6
VOLATILE GAMES
Fine, but doesn't do enough to stand out. Needs more dog.

Devil May Cry 4 7
CAPCOM
Memorable bosses but too much backtracking spoils things.

Eat Lead: The Return of Matt Hazard 6
VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE
Great concept and nice parody, but basic one-play stuff.

Fracture 7
DAY 1 STUDIOS
Altering terrain is a neat twist but overall it left us wanting.

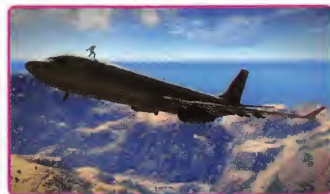
Front Mission Evolved 7
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
Likable but limited mech-based combat.

Genji: Days of the Blade 5
GAME REPUBLIC
Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, piss-poor plodding gameplay.

RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters: The Video Game 9
TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE
Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

Iron Man 3
SECRET LEVEL
Filled to the brim with bugs. Substandard.

John Woo Presents: Stranglehold 7
MIDWAY CHICAGO
Packs frantic *Max Payne*-lite fun.



JUST CAUSE 2 9
DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE STUDIOS
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
PLAYERS: 1
"Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. Why don't you already own this game? If you can dream it, you can do it in this insane action game."

Kane & Lynch: Dead Men 6
IO INTERACTIVE
A let down. Gets close to greatness before crashing back down.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days 7
IO INTERACTIVE
Michael Mann/YouTube visuals? Great. The game? Average.

Lost Planet: Extreme Condition 6
CAPCOM / K2 LLC
A half-arsed port you'd never bother with.

Lost Planet 2 7
CAPCOM
Slim pickings for solo players but multiplayer buffs may dig it.

RECOMMENDED Mercenaries 2: World in Flames 8
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Weak in many areas but has fun in spades.

Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight 3
NAMCO BANDAI
A rubber Godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 8
TEAM NINJA
A treasure trove of gaming goodness. And violence.

RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 8
TEAM NINJA
A sexy and rock hard title but the gore's been cut.

RECOMMENDED Prototype 8
RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT
A simple superhero kill-fest but a truckload of guilty fun.

RECOMMENDED Red Faction: Guerrilla 9
VOLITION, INC.
The best destruction effects ever, hands down.

Saints Row 2 9
VOLITION, INC.
Puerile, mean-spirited and technically outclassed, if you care.

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Confrontation 6
SLANT SIX GAMES
A sturdy effort that fails to excite.

Terminator Salvation 4
GRIN / HALCYON GAMES
An abysmal failure. Short, filled with glitches.

Time Crisis: Razing Storm 6
NAMCO
Simple, short light gun fare. Ignore the new first-person shooter mode, it's awful.

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 8
RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT
A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets.

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen 6
LUXOFLUX
A day of undemanding fun but no more.

Transformers: War for Cybertron 7
HIGH MOON
Good multiplayer. Fun but not engaging.

RECOMMENDED Vanquish 8
PLATINUM GAMES
Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

Wanted: Weapons of Fate 5
GRIN
Designed only to appeal to mentally-subnormal 11-year-olds.

RECOMMENDED Warhawk 9
INCOGNITO ENTERTAINMENT / SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night.

WET 8
A2M
With so much style, who needs substance? Great grindhouse fare.

Wheelman 6
MIDWAY STUDIOS - NEWCASTLE / TIGON STUDIOS
Rubbish low-speed handling and underdone throughout.

X-Men Origins: Wolverine 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE
A head slicin' chest beater of a slash 'em up.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

3D Dot Game Heroes 7
FROM SOFTWARE
If you pine for the past this should keep you entertained.

Alone in the Dark: Inferno 6
EDEN STUDIOS
Post-*Dead Space* it doesn't cut the mustard.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A landmark. Dated now, but was truly awe-inspiring at the time.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed II 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor.

RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum 8
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
Really delivers the goods. Best Batman game ever. Best superhero game full stop.

RECOMMENDED Brütal Legend 9
DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS
Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it's settled: Tim Schafer is God.

RECOMMENDED Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 9
MERCURY STEAM
Easily one of the best games of 2010.

Clash of the Titans 4
GAME REPUBLIC
A piss-poor action game lacking in every way.

Conan 7
NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
A buldog of bloodletting, savage adventure and boobies.

RECOMMENDED Dante's Inferno 8
VISCERAL GAMES
Derivative but well-produced and good fun.

RECOMMENDED Darksiders 8
VIGIL GAMES
It'll test your patience but persevere and your satisfaction will swell.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 9
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Super tense. The future of survival horror.

Demon's Souls 7
FROM SOFTWARE
Those looking for an extreme challenge may have met their match.

RECOMMENDED Enslaved 8
NINJA THEORY
A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's *Monkey* was.

Fairytale Fights 7
PLAYLOGIC GAME FACTORY
Quirky and sadistic but too simplistic.

Folklore 8
GAME REPUBLIC
Original and surprising with moments of genius.

The Godfather: The Don's Edition 6
EA REDWOOD SHORES
It made for a decent PS2 game but skip this port. It's not worth it.

Three-dee flip-flop?



Shrewd fans would have noticed that *Enslaved* took an in-game shot at 3D TVs. When the two protagonists enter a decaying warehouse full of old '3D TV' boxes, Monkey asks "what is this stuff?". Trip replies: "old jettisoned, irrelevant technology..."

Well it seems Ninja Theory have now reversed their opinion, as the new DLC for *Enslaved* also patches it to work with 3D glasses.

She's on fire

You may have noticed that *Heavenly Sword's* heroine, Nariko, has a lot in common with *Enslaved's* Trip. When we mentioned the similarity to *Ninja Theory* they responded "our visual art director, Alex Taini, likes redheads so when we request a girl design, she's always firey".



The Godfather II
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Starts as a decent crime caper but alienates fans of the film.

ESSENTIAL God of War III
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking, astonishing visuals.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO / BLUEPOINT GAMES
Age has not diminished its impact. Purchase immediately.

Golden Axe: Beast Rider
SECRET LEVEL
Destined for the chopping block. No co-op? Boo!

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV
ROCKSTAR NORTH
The technical scope and scale of *GTAIV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: EPISODES FROM LIBERTY CITY
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR NORTH
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR PLAYERS: 1-16
"Superior to *GTAIV* in many ways with two new and more interesting single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer options and a vast array of new weapons and vehicles. Explosive shotgun? Yes please."

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince
EA BRIGHT LIGHT STUDIO
Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix
EA UK
The chore-like structure will probably bore most.

Heavenly Sword
NINJA THEORY
Slick graphics and refined combat. A bit short though.

Hellboy: The Science of Evil
KROME STUDIOS
Sluggish and generic. Ordinary on all counts. A shame, really.

RECOMMENDED inFamous
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A superpowered take on the urban crime-fighting sandbox.

LEGO Batman
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Sound and faithful, but the formula is getting a bit old.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4
TRAVELLER'S TALES
The most thorough LEGO universe yet. More exploration than combat.

RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Happiness and wonder overcame us with this joyous adaptation.

Lost: Via Domus
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

RECOMMENDED Mafia 2
2K CZECH
Its attention to detail, presentation and sound is to be admired.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots
KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
Insane productions values. A titan amongst games. Epic.

Overlord: Raising Hell
4J STUDIOS / TRIUMPH STUDIOS
A bundle of fun, mixing tactics with a juvenile love of chaos.

Overlord II
TRIUMPH STUDIOS
Refined gameplay and more jokes but control quirks persist.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End
EUROCOM
Looks the part but unfortunately it doesn't feel or play the part.

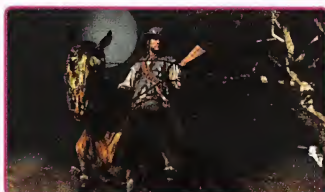
Planet 51
PYRO STUDIOS
Like a dry cracker for dinner. Bland and boring, and no fun.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Worth your time but better swordplay could've really helped.

Prison Break
ZOOTFLY
A below-average stealth game cobbled together on the cheap.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR PLAYERS: 1-16
"A sweeping epic that's among the best games we've ever played. We're not lying when we say it's better than *GTAIV* in a lot of crucial areas."

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5
CAPCOM
A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED The Saboteur
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

SAW II: Flesh & Blood
ZOMBIE INC.
Lacks finesse but boasts some decent puzzles.

Silent Hill Homecoming
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
New combat system is good, but lacks the cerebral chills.

The Simpsons Game
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Short, but the cromulent visuals embiggen the experience.

Sonic the Hedgehog
SONIC TEAM
There are cheaper ways to get a spare Bluray case.

Sonic Unleashed
SONIC TEAM
Hey! It's the least awful Sonic game in years!

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions
BEENOX
Looks great – but why have we gone back to swinging from invisible hooks in the sky?

Spider-Man: Web of Shadows
TREYARCH / SHABA GAMES
Swift and tidy but not exactly deep.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
LUCASARTS
Fails to use its idea to maximum effect.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

Toy Story 3
AVALANCHE SOFTWARE
Cute, simple, and charming as hell.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted: Drake's Fortune
NAUGHTY DOG
Awesome plot, awesome graphics, awesome action. This owns.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
NAUGHTY DOG
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.

Viking: Battle for Asgard
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
Slow attacks and weak visuals but it has its appeal.

Yakuza 3
AMUSEMENT VISION
Lots to do but the slow pace grates.

ADVENTURE

RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain
QUANTIC DREAM
Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust
TEAM17 SOFTWARE
An amazing new low for this generation.

FIGHTING

Battle Fantasia
ARC SYSTEM WORKS
A nice curiosity but, seriously, get *Super Street Fighter IV*.



THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation®Store



FINAL FANTASY VII
DEVELOPER: SQUARE
PLAYERS: 1
The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, *Final Fantasy VII* is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



DRIVER
DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1
The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through 3D cities may old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted it was like nothing we'd seen.



CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED
DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
PLAYERS: 1
The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-built levels goes, *this* is the zenith.



SYPHON FILTER
DEVELOPER: EIDETIC
PLAYERS: 1
If you still think *Siphon Filter* was a *MGS* rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.



MEDIEVIL
DEVELOPER: SCE STUDIO
CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS: 1
Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's *Sir Dan*? Fantasy hack 'n slash meets the supernatural, *Medievil* still does it better than most since.



inhouse

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

Danger Close

LOCATION: LOS ANGELES, USA FOUNDED: 2010 BEST KNOWN FOR: MEDAL OF HONOR

Danger Close is a new name and a fresh start for a large portion of EA Los Angeles (perhaps better known as EALA).

The Danger Close story, however, begins way back in the mid '90s. DreamWorks Interactive, founded in 1995, was responsible for over half a dozen PSone games (including *Skullmonkeys*, *Medal of Honor* and *Medal of Honor: Underground*). It was acquired by EA in 2000 and in 2003 it was merged with Westwood Studios (the creators of *Command & Conquer*) and EA Pacific (originally Westwood Pacific) to create EA Los Angeles. Since then it's churned out another handful of PlayStation titles, including *Medal of Honor: Frontline*, *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent*, *Medal of Honor: Airborne* and *Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3*.

Like *Dead Space* developer Visceral Games (formerly known as EA Redwood Shores), Danger Close Games doesn't encompass all of the staff at its physical location but will be the far catchier name behind the studio's high profile games from now on.

"We wanted our own identity," says studio head Greg Goodrich, "something that we could all be passionate and proud of moving forward. It was kinda funny, when we started throwing things around – a lot of time there's a

committee and there are outsiders that have bearing on what a company name will be with websites and domain names and all these things."

So why Danger Close? Senior creative director Richard Farrelly was playing the new *Medal of Honor* at the time and all of a sudden one of the supporting characters, Jim Patterson (the grandson of Jimmy Patterson from the original *Medal of Honor*), yelled out in-game, "Danger close! We've got danger close fire!" It all just clicked.

Danger Close staff members can be distinguished by their beards. Up to *Medal of Honor's* release the team had been carrying on an internal beard-a-thon (originally intended for a planned trip to Afghanistan which was ultimately cancelled). They found a way to raise money from the exercise though and all the proceeds from the beard-a-thon will go to SEALFund.org, which supports Navy SEAL families and dependents.

What's next for Danger Close? Goodrich is content to leave his studio's future plans a mystery.

"That's also a part of creating your own identity and starting your own future, and throwing up a website that says 'Now hiring,'" says Goodrich. "There's intent there."

RECOMMENDED BlazBlue: Continuum Shift 9
ARC SYSTEM WORKS
Still wilder, wackier and noisier than anything else on PS3.

Def Jam: Icon 8
EA CHICAGO
Pretty and highly kinetic. A bit cumbersome.

FaceBreaker 7
EA CANADA
Great look but very unbalanced.

The Fight: Lights Out 5
COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE
The Move controls don't feel as organic as we'd hoped they would. Sorry Danny Trejo.

The King of Fighters XII 3
SNKPLAYMORE
Grey, old and well beyond retirement. Irredeemable.

Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe 7
MIDWAY GAMES
A fun game with mass appeal but not very technical.

RECOMMENDED Soulcalibur IV 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Phenomenal, but will let down those expecting a revolution.

RECOMMENDED Street Fighter IV 10
CAPCOM / DIMPS
A tight-fisted gut blow of wow, but you'd grab *Super Street Fighter IV* instead now.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV 10
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM/DIMPS
PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

"With the 'vanilla' versions vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay – but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price – *Super Street Fighter IV* belongs in everyone's collection."

RECOMMENDED Tekken 6 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Easy to play, with the biggest roster ever. Feels a bit old, though.

TNA Impact! 6
MIDWAY STUDIOS - LOS ANGELES
Good, arcade-style biff but there's not enough content.

Virtua Fighter 5 8
SEGA-AM2
As hardcore as fighting games get.

WWE Legends of WrestleMania 6
YUKE'S
Gets by on retro charm but feels absolutely ancient.

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010 8
YUKE'S
If the soap-drama of the WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana.

FLYING

Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII 7
UBISOFT ROMANIA
A simple aerial blaster. Flawed but fun.

Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII 6
UBISOFT ROMANIA
Solid, varied, but not quite the ace of aces.

Heroes Over Europe 7
TRANSMISSION GAMES
A little rough but not bad. *IL-2* is much better though.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY 8

DEVELOPER: GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT
PUBLISHER: AFA PLAYERS: 1-16
"Head turning visuals, astonishing attention to detail, brilliant sound effects and stacks of ratta-tat action all combine in this truly surprisingly awesome aerial combat game. To be honest it's the best flight game we've ever played."

Lair 5
FACTOR 5
It feels rushed and unfinished. Deeply disappointing.

Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 7
UBISOFT ROMANIA
Tight and accessible but a bit sterile.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 8
UBISOFT ROMANIA
A top gun successor. More detail, better mission design.

MUSIC

AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack 7
HARMONIX
Bare-bones stuff but the music is worth it. Fully exportable.

THE BEST PSP GAMES



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEEDS
PLAYERS: 1-6

This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP – and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. No, we're totally serious.



MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-4

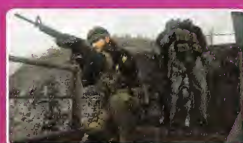
Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to and will reward you in spades if you're able to put the effort in.



WIPEOUT PULSE

DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL
PLAYERS: 1-8

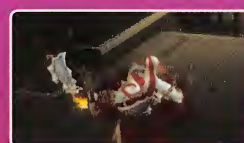
Beautiful and weighted just right, it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason *Wipeout* just works – and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just pips the likes of *Burnout Legends* and *Gran Turismo* for best racing game on PSP.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
PLAYERS: 1-6

Polished, well-produced and thought-out, this is a must-have if you own a PSP. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. Buy this game – and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss.



GOD OF WAR: CHAINS OF OLYMPUS

DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN
PLAYERS: 1

With fantastic graphics and tighter-than-hades gameplay being shrunk to PSP scale hasn't made this series any less epic. Honestly, if you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

Band Hero 7
NEVERSOFT
Robust but the over-zealous censorship grates a lot.

RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band 9
HARMONIX
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 9
FREESTYLEGAMES
Tough to write off as a gimmick.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2 9
FREESTYLEGAMES
Some great improvements and some excellent, unique mixes.

RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band 8
HARMONIX
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock 9
NEVERSOFT
The last *GH* with a mostly decent soundtrack.

Guitar Hero World Tour 9
NEVERSOFT
Good, but missing crucial elements that make *Rock Band* better.

Guitar Hero 5 7
NEVERSOFT
Improving, but the hipster tracklist is a dud.

Guitar Hero: Aerosmith 6
NEVERSOFT
Dated and weak compared to the likes of *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica 8
NEVERSOFT
The best in the series since *Guitar Hero III*.

Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits 7
BEENOX
Great past *GH* tracks with full band support. Seriously though, why wasn't it just DLC?

Guitar Hero: Van Halen 6
UNDERGROUND DEVELOPMENT
Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA *GH5* buyers got it as a free bonus.

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock 7
NEVERSOFT
Functional, but it just isn't evolving at the same rate as its peers.

LEGO Rock Band 8
HARMONIX / TRAVELLER'S TALES
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band 10
HARMONIX
The best party game ever, until *Rock Band 2*.

ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2 10
HARMONIX
The best music game around.

SingStar 8
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

PARTY

EyePet 7
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

Hail to the Chimp 3
WIDELOAD GAMES
Want to lose friends? Play this with them.

Kung Fu Rider 3
JAPAN STUDIO
Waggle-based bullshit. A terrible example of a Move game.

Scene It? Bright Lights! Big Screen! 5
A2M
Vanilla compared to the past Xbox versions.

The Shoot 6
COHORT STUDIOS
A good Move rail shooter. Cool presentation.

RECOMMENDED Sports Champions 8
ZINDAGIGAMES
Despite a few quirks this is the must-have Move title.

Start the Party! 6
SUPERMASSIVE GAMES
Great to keep the rugrats amused for a while.

PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Joyfulness, digitally realised. Infectious.

LittleBigPlanet 10
MEDIA MOLECULE
Innovative and never-ending. It's time to hit the sack!

RACING

Baja: Edge of Control 6
2XL GAMES
A little bland but brilliant handling and sound.

Blur 7
BIZARRE CREATIONS
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise 9
CRITERION GAMES
Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

RECOMMENDED Colin McRae: DiRT 9
CODEMASTERS
Plenty of real rally action, unlike its sequel.

Colin McRae: DiRT 2 7
CODEMASTERS
Flashy and drives fine but it's style over substance here.

Ferrari Challenge 7
EUTECHNYX
Serious and robust but it won't trouble *Gran Turismo 5*.



F1 2010 9
DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS PLAYERS: 1-12
"The best pure racing game we've played in many, many years. The presentation is spot-on, the weather effects are stunning and the racing is frantic and realistic. Want a racing game that will send your knuckles white? This is it. Acquire immediately."

Fuel 4
ASOBO STUDIOS
Huge, but bugged, boring and undercooked.

Full Auto 2: Battletines 7
PSEUDO INTERACTIVE
Fun but shallow. You'd take *Split/Second* instead these days.

Gran Turismo 5 Prologue 8
POLYPHONY DIGITAL
An appetising taster but not the full course.

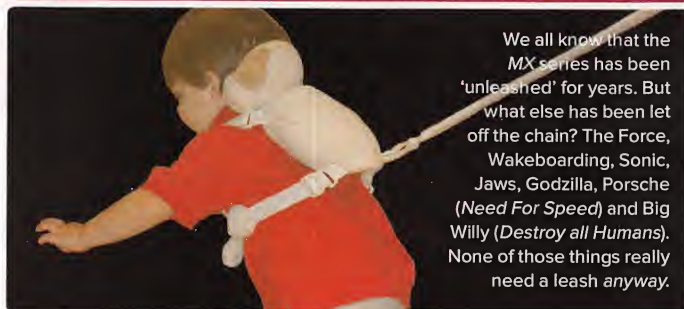
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights 7
JUICE GAMES
Stout mechanics, glossy options. Not too deep though.

Midnight Club: Los Angeles 7
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
Visually weak at times. Great customisation and seamless racing.

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers 9
UNITED FRONT GAMES
An incredible package. Creating is even more fun than racing.

MotoGP 09/10 6
MONUMENTAL GAMES
Simulation freaks will want to veer well away.

Leash Unleashed: The Unleashing



We all know that the *MX* series has been 'unleashed' for years. But what else has been let off the chain? The Force, Wakeboarding, Sonic, Jaws, Godzilla, Porsche (*Need For Speed*) and Big Willy (*Destroy all Humans*). None of those things really need a leash anyway.

RECOMMENDED MotorStorm 10
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Fast, hard and dirty. In 2007 it was everything game should be. Things have come on a bit since then though.

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Boasts splitscreen but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

MX vs. ATV: Untamed 6
RAINBOW STUDIOS
Feels like a PS2 port with no next gen goodness.

MX vs. ATV Reflex 7
RAINBOW STUDIOS
Motocross freaks will love it. Needed a little more zest though.

Need for Speed: Carbon 8
EA BLACK BOX
A bit more Paul Walker than Vin Diesel, but solid.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed: SHIFT 9
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS
Superbly presented and a blast to play. Feels fast.

Need for Speed: Undercover 5
EA BLACK BOX
Technically faulty, and adds nothing good since *Most Wanted*.

RECOMMENDED Pure 9
BLACK ROCK STUDIOS
Still one of the best arcade racers on the market.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID 9
CODEMASTERS
A born-to-rage racing rebel. Good, but lacks the *Race Driver* vintage, despite the name. *V8 Supercars 4* this is not.

SBK-X: Superbike World Championship 7
MILESTONE
Inches in front of *MotoGP 09/10*. Purists may still hate on it.

Sega Rally 7
SEGA RACING STUDIO
Familiar, old-school arcade fun.

Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing 7
SUMO DIGITAL
Fun but shallow. Copies from the best but missing crucial spark.

RECOMMENDED Split/Second 8
BLACK ROCK STUDIO
Doesn't feel as sharp as *Burnout* but it's a true challenger.

Stuntman: Ignition 9
PARADIGM ENTERTAINMENT
The vehicular equivalent of a 10-hour long orgasm.

SuperCar Challenge 7
EUTECHNYX
Admirable effort but feels a little bland despite the exotic cars.

Superstars V8: Next Challenge 7
MILESTONE
An improvement but it's still more shallow than it thinks it is.

RECOMMENDED WRC 8
MILESTONE
Drab graphics, imperfect sound, but a joyfully robust driving model.

RPG/ACTION RPG

Alpha Protocol 5
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever.

Cross Edge 3
COMPILE HEART
Every benchmark of excellence has been missed. Offensive.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins 9
BIOWARE
As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.

ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
Simply put: awesome.



FALLOUT 3 9
DEVELOPER: BETHESDA PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS PLAYERS: 1
"Taking the solid base of *Oblivion* and placing it into a post-apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly."

RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas 8
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
A great ride but you've been on it before.

RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII 8
SQUARE ENIX
Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action.

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 9
RAVEN SOFTWARE
Colourful, action-packed, co-op dungeon crawling.

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2 7
VICARIOUS VISIONS
A compelling romp but the button-mashing play needs updating.

Nier 7
CAVIA UNRELEASED
Decent enough, but there are richer experiences elsewhere.

Resonance of Fate 6
TRI-ACE
Deep, but also wordy, clunky and ugly.

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel 6
ASCARON ENTERTAINMENT
Gigantic, but feels very slapped together.

Valkyria Chronicles 8
SEGA WDW
Strategy and RPG heads alike should not miss this game.

White Knight Chronicles 6
LEVEL-5 / SCE JAPAN STUDIO
Not a great way to spend 30-or-so hours.

SHOOTER

RECOMMENDED Aliens vs. Predator 9
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
One of the best movie-inspired titles ever. Beyond brutal.

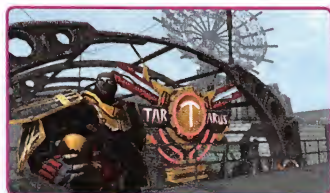
RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Destructible environments and humour. Together at last.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A top-tier shooter but the single-player mischief is M.I.A.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 8
IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN
14 months too late, but this is grown-up gaming at its best.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 2 9
2K MARIN / DIGITAL EXTREMES / 2K AUSTRALIA
Doesn't match the original's plot.

BlackSite: Area 51 5
MIDWAY STUDIOS AUSTIN
A pedestrian shooter that needed more time in the lab.



BORDERLANDS 9
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4
"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better. It takes the best elements from RPGs and fuses them to a superb shooter. The result is quite simply the most rewarding co-op to date. The fact it's being supported by so much extra DLC, even this long after release, means it's great value for money too."

RECOMMENDED Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway 8
GEARBOX SOFTWARE
The most authentic WWII shooter ever made.

Call of Duty 3 7
TREYARCH
Solid but surprisingly unspectacular.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare 10
INFINITY WARD
Relentlessly exciting. You'd have to be mental to miss this.



MODERN WARFARE 2 10
DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION PLAYERS: 1-18
"It's almost like three games in one, stuffed with moments that will leave you shocked and breathless with excitement. Supremely crafted, *Modern Warfare 2* is, with its older brother, a high-watermark for this generation of shooters."

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: World at War 10
TREYARCH
A class act. War at its worst (and best). Proof you can make a great WWII game set (partially) in the Pacific. Plus, Nazi Zombies.

Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood 7
TECHLAND
A cinematic and action-packed Western shooter.

RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena 8
STARBREEZE STUDIOS / TIGON STUDIOS
Moody and fresh. A must play. You don't need to know the movies to enjoy it either.

Condemned 2: Bloodshot 9
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
Gripping stuff. We were blown away. Shame the original isn't on PS3.

RECOMMENDED The Darkness 9
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
Stunning, original and gory as hell. Cross your fingers for a sequel because this rocks.

F.E.A.R. 8
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS / DAY 1 STUDIOS
A chilling ride, but the graphics could've been sharper.

F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin 7
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.

RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A technical open-world bell-ringer but the travel time will grate.

Haze 6
FREE RADICAL DESIGN
A flop. Patchy visuals, apostate level design and dismal AI.

ESSENTIAL Killzone 2 10
GUERRILLA GAMES
Lives up to the hype. Amazing graphics, hectic action.

Legendary 4
SPARK UNLIMITED
A rushed mess. Terrible.

RECOMMENDED MAG 9
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Shooter junkies take heed: this is where it's at for online combat.

RECOMMENDED Medal of Honor 8
DANGER CLOSE / DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Not sexy but it's a gritty, realistic shooter with great atmosphere.

Medal of Honor: Airborne 6
EA LOS ANGELES
Short and lacks much true innovation. Too many problems.

RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge 8
EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A true original that makes some grand leaps in design.

Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising 8
CODEMASTERS
Authentic but niche. Very unforgiving.

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box 9
EA UK / VALVE CORPORATION
Portal is worth virtually any asking price alone.

Quantum of Solace 7
TREYARCH
Nearly there but has a few too many faults to get over the line.

RECOMMENDED Resistance: Fall of Man 10
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A truly fantastic launch title with the best weapons around.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 2 9
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Fast, furious and stuffed with action.

Rogue Warrior 3
ZOMBIE STUDIOS / REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
A fiasco. We tried to like it but it's too short and too terrible.

Singularity 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE
Had potential but wasn't quite worth the wait.

Soldier of Fortune: Payback 6
CAULDRON HQ
Serviceable, we guess, but the gore has been cut out for us.

Time Crisis 4 7
SABER ENTERTAINMENT
A little bipolar at times. Stick with arcade mode and enjoy.

TimeShift 6
SABER INTERACTIVE
A solid attempt that doesn't quite reach 88 miles per hour.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Slack, good-looking and utterly engaging. Smart shooting.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 7
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Doesn't quite feel as good or as cool as the first one.

Turning Point: Fall of Liberty 4
SPARK UNLIMITED
Shells from start to finish. Great concept, bogus execution.

Turok 7
PROPAGANDA GAMES
The new *Turok* packs bite but it's missing a few teeth.

Unreal Tournament 3 8
EPIC GAMES
Fast, twitchy online multiplayer shooting. No splitscreen though.

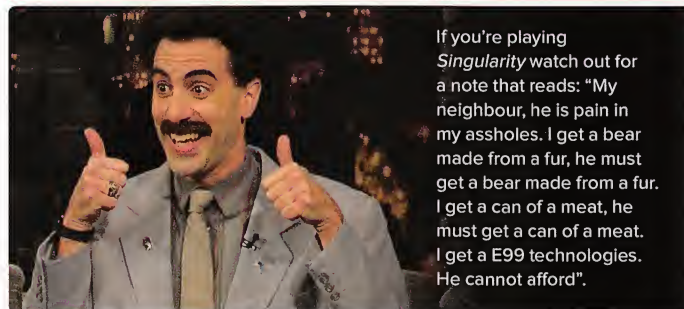
Wolfenstein 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE / ID SOFTWARE
Lacks soul but delivers Nazi-blasting action.

SPORTS

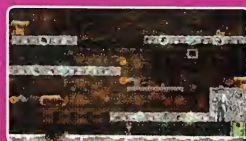
2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa 7
EA CANADA
Blissful, *FIFA 10* football with a World Cup facelift. A bit pricey.

Ashes Cricket 2009 6
TRANSMISSION GAMES
Disappointing, but stick through the ugly for some multiplayer beauty.

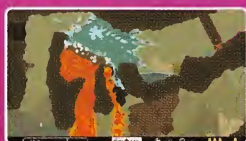
Hilarious easter egg ahoy



THE BEST PSN GAMES ON PlayStation®Store



BRAID
DEVELOPER: HOTHREAD
PLAYERS: 1
A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming, it's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man.



PIXELJUNK SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: Q-GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-2
Take control of a tiny ship and navigate your way through various caverns, rescuing any survivors along the way. Of course, there's interesting gameplay mechanics thrown into the mix, such as fluid water and lava dynamics that need to be used to solve puzzles.



FLIGHT CONTROL HD
DEVELOPER: FIREMINT
PLAYERS: 1-4
Possibly the most addictive and accessible PSN title available. The premise is simply to guide the aircraft on-screen to their respective runways. That's it – but you'll be totally hooked. One of the best games to play with PlayStation Move too.



SHANK
DEVELOPER: KLEI ENTERTAINMENT
SAN DIEGO PLAYERS: 1-2
An ultra-violent 2D side-scroller inspired by the classic beat 'em ups of the '80s. Aesthetically it's a beautifully animated homage to the greatest graphic novels and golden-age comics. Stuffed with guns and machetes *Shank* is a cut above the rest.



MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-2
It's by no means 'straight' *Street Fighter* though nor should it be. Stuffed with 56 characters this three-on-three brawler is a visual and aural explosion. The HD treatment is superbly done. If you're a fighting nut you should have this already.

Recovering from a bail



A sequel to *Tony Hawk: Ride* is confirmed to be in the works, with the Birdman himself saying he's working on *Tony Hawk: Shred* with *Ride* developer Robomodo.

Why will it be better? According to Activision Publishing's CEO, Mike Griffith, "[the original] took longer to optimize the hardware, leaving less time to optimize the software".

We hope Tony can stick this trick.

Backbreaker

NATURALMOTION

Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in a sports game.

Beijing 2008

EUROCOM

Not the worst of its type but far from a game to buy and keep.

**FIFA 11**

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA

PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22

"While the hundreds of matches ahead may eventually bring this titan back to Earth with another wish-list of changes for *FIFA 12*, at the moment *FIFA 11* remains a bafflingly brilliant update. If you've skipped the last few *FIFA* updates boost the score by one. Seriously, it's that good. Essential."

RECOMMENDED Fight Night Round 4

EA CANADA

Runs like a dream. Technical and strategic, plus it looks absolutely brilliant.

International Cricket 2010

TRICKSTAR GAMES

Not the most comprehensive cricket game but certainly the best when you're on the pitch.

John Daly's ProStroke Golf

GUSTO GAMES

Those looking for a high production value golf game should give this the shaft.

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K11

VISUAL CONCEPTS / KUSH GAMES

Hard court high priest Michael Jordan stars in perhaps the best basketball game ever.

NBA Street: Homecourt

EA CANADA

Brash, addictive arcade basketball.

Pro Evolution Soccer 2011

KONAMI

Good for a goal fix, still second best overall.

Rugby League Live

BIG ANT

Not as complete a game as the last one on PS2 and the whack team ratings frustrate.

Shaun White Skateboarding

UBISOFT MONTREAL

Kudos for the quirky touches but the skating itself is pretty bland.

Shaun White Snowboarding

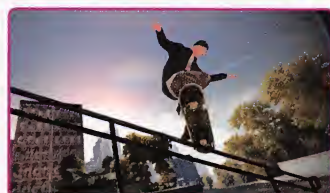
UBISOFT MONTREAL

Lacks the fine touch of realism or the excitement of lunacy.

RECOMMENDED Skate

EA BLACK BOX

A well-balanced masterpiece and true *Tony Hawk* killer. Trumped its sequels.

**SKATE 2**

DEVELOPER: BLACK BOX

PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8

"*Skate 2* is one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense and packed with natural lines and the balance is sublime."

RECOMMENDED Skate 3

EA BLACK BOX

Better in many ways, although the city isn't as cool as *Skate 2*.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09

EA TIBURON

Still the only golf game worth owning.

Tony Hawk's Project 8

NEVERSOFT

No real reason to revisit this post-*Skate* at all.

Tony Hawk's Proving Ground

NEVERSOFT

Bloated and inconsistent. Pass.

Tony Hawk: RIDE

ROBOMODO

Pure frustration made plastic.

Top Spin 3

PAM DEVELOPMENT

Realistic tennis with a steep learning curve.

UFC 2009 Undisputed

YUKE'S

A technical, rewarding fighter.

RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 2010

YUKE'S

The new undisputed baron of sports fighting.

Vancouver 2010

EUROCOM

A handful of events that last one afternoon.

RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 2009

SUMO DIGITAL

The top seed of tennis made even better.

STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED Civilization Revolution

FIRAXIS GAMES

Great fun and shockingly addictive.

RECOMMENDED R.U.S.E.

EUGEN SYSTEMS

Niche but supremely well-crafted strategy.

The Sims 3

THE SIMS STUDIO

Waiting to pounce on the right type of gamer.

Stormrise

THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

A cack-handed, future war mess.

Tom Clancy's EndWar

UBISOFT SHANGHAI

Far from a finished product.

infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

2004: DRIVEN TO DESTRUCTION

CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION 2 GENRE: RACING DEVELOPER: MONSTER GAMES COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: USA CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$20 (EBAY)



There was one thing missing from this game – but we can't really blame the studio for its omission. The crew at Minnesota, USA based Monster Games have probably never heard of a dunny derby, hence its absence from *Driven to Destruction*.

Driven to Destruction, or *Test Drive: Eve of Destruction* as it was called in the US, was a destruction derby game set in the deep south where there are (apparently) a lot of old cars and not a lot else to do other than drive them into each other.

Driven to Destruction was a pretty unremarkable game in retrospect. The handling was passable but not quite as good as we'd have liked. The visuals had taken a significant kick in the cads on account of the sheer wealth of destruction on offer. The sense of speed wasn't quite there either and the short soundtrack got old fast.

The thing it didn't lack, however, was race types. There was simply so much racing on offer. There were figure 8 races with a jump where the circuit crossed. You'd run the risk of a horrible mid-air T-bone twice every lap. There were suicide races, where half the field drove clockwise around a track and the other half drove anticlockwise. Red Rover had the all cars trying to make back and forth

across a patch of ground (the last one to arrive was eliminated). There were school bus races. Hearse races. Caravan and trailer races. Chain races, with pairs of cars chained together. Whip around races, where the whole field would have to turn around and race the other way at the end of each lap. That's just the stuff we can remember.

Destruction derby games have become increasingly less common since *Driven to Destruction*. The last in the popular PlayStation *Destruction Derby* series, *Destruction Derby Arenas*, was rubbish and we haven't seen the brand since. Finnish studio Bugbear is working on an unannounced action driving game, which is likely the next in the *FlatOut* franchise (which has been an *OPS* favourite since it debuted), but that's really it. The destruction derby has become the Randy Quaid of racing games; a weird, hick cousin taking the sheen of the dozens of glossy exotic racers by making a giant mess of the place when the shitter's full.



HILLBILLY DELUX

There were 25 different race events all up, plus a host of side races to plough through. Career mode was pretty juicy as a result. You'd begin with a beat down old paddock basher of a car, a modest amount of coin and a trailer park home in a backwater town. All you had to do was drive out and look for a race. Each main race area was indicated by an icon on your map, as were other important places (like the scrap yard where you could buy new cars with your winnings and the auto shop where you could buy and apply upgrades). New cars had to be purchased periodically because while you could repair cars you thrashed on the track some damage was irreparable (and irreparable damage added up over time).

Next month

MASS EFFECT 2!

*One of this
generation's
greatest games
comes to PS3!*

PLUS 2011 REVIEWS

DiRT 3 • Bodycount • Deus Ex:
Human Revolution • Dead Space 2
LittleBigPlanet 2 • and more!

ON SALE DECEMBER 8

The **only** PS3 mag with 100% Australian content!

PlayStation®
Official Magazine - Australia

Disclaimer: OPS will do everything to deliver this content next month but we can't be held at fault if things go awry or scheduled games slip and miss our deadline!



*Celebrate Today.
Live it again Tomorrow.*



Australia Day
Celebrate what's great!

Australia Day isn't just about freedom and wide-open spaces. We're not just celebrating our diverse blend of cultures. And it's not just about friends coming together for an all-day eat-a-thon. We celebrate on 26 January because tomorrow, we get to live it all over again. To find out about celebrations near you, visit australiaday.org.au



RED DEAD REDEMPTION™ UNDEAD NIGHTMARE

IN STORES NOW
UNDEAD TO THE END

ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/REDDEADREDEMPTION



Strong violence,
coarse language
and sex scene



PS3
PlayStation 3



XBOX 360. XBOX
LIVE

